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Board of Directors Meeting Minutes December 5, 2023; 7-9PM

Members Present: Jessica Bizub, Gary Eldred, Scott Fulton, Katie Hahn, Harvey Halverson, Rich Henderson, Evanne Hunt, Jerry Newman, Deanna Pomije, Jon Rigden, Jim Rogala, Jay Rutherford, Stephen Winter, Kay Wienke

Members Absent: David Hamel and Alice Mirk

Staff Present: Sarah Barron, Debra Behrens, Kelly Billig, Becky Bradish, Dan Carter, Nate Lee, Khris Miller, Duncan Schultz

Guest Present: Rob Schuettpelz

President, Jim Rogala, calls the meeting to order at 7:04PM

Agenda

A. & B. Adopt Meeting & Consent Agenda

Jon asked about chainsaw policy and training. The Land Management Committee (LMC) is still working on developing a policy. No current policy on training but TPE has a chainsaw safety equipment policy. Chapter Support (CS) will find the chainsaw safety equipment policy and make it available.

Evanne Hunt makes motion to approve both the meeting and consent agendas. Harvey Halverson seconds the motion. All in favor. So moved. Motion passes.

C. Treasurer's Report – Presented by Rob Schuettpelz

1. ACTION ITEM: Review and vote on proposed 15-month budget

Rob Schuettpelz presents a three-year historical financial overview and the proposed 15-month budget. The historic overview goes through September 2023. Rob compares TPE's first three quarter budgets from 2020-2023. This comparison shows the growth TPE has undergone.

Currently in 2023 we're at a deficit of \$360,000 through Oct. 2023. Deficits are common in the first three quarters of the year. Projections show the year ending with a \$93,000 deficit. Rob takes questions after the budget presentation. We're in a period of growth which often means a deficit. There's hope that 2024-25 will be closer to balanced budget.

Quarter 5 is a one-time only occurrence as we change the fiscal year from January-December to April-March.

Rob reviews the new 15-month budget (which shows the additional 5th Quarter). Historically January-March is a light quarter for fundraising and revenue. Budgets project 2023-2024 ending with a deficit.

Jerry Newman makes motion to approve the 15-month budget. Jay Rutherford seconds the motion. All in favor. So moved. Motion passes.

D. President's Report - Jim Rogala

Jim gives an update on the burn policy. The LMC agreed to allow Nate Lee, CS staff, to sign the burn policy volunteer forms. Some entities, especially counties and municipalities, don't like some of the language in the burn policy forms. LMC will work with attorneys from those areas as well as TPE's attorney to find a resolution.

Scott is leaving the LMC now that the burn policy is almost complete. We do have two new members who have joined the LMC: Michaela Rosenthal of the Glacial Prairie Chapter (GPC) and Jake Pulfer of the Northwest Illinois Chapter of The Prairie Enthusiasts (NIPE).

Alice Mirk of GPC is joining the Education Committee. Topf Wells of the Empire-Sauk Chapter (E-SC) is joining the Land Protection Committee (LPC).

Jim won't be able to attend the January 19-20 retreat, but he's happy to talk to folks before the meeting. He's available until January 17th.

E. Executive Director's Report - Debra Behrens

Debra starts by thanking Rob for his hard work on a very challenging year. She also thanks the work of the Finance Committee.

At the last Board meeting Debra talked about developing a culture of philanthropy. Debra publicly thanks Evanne for making thank you calls, as well as Jerry and Katie for writing thank you notes. More Board members are welcome to join the thank you train by reaching out to Duncan or our general email: info@theprairieenthusiasts.org.

A huge thank you to Jay and Libby Rutherford for their \$5,000 match again this year. The match was met in just 9 days. Coulee Region Chapter Chair, Justin Nooker, also did a follow-on match to the Rutherford's match. Plus, we received a \$10,000 match from Tim and Liz Kritter for new or increased gifts. This match expires on 12/31/23 and we want to make that match threshold so please share with your Chapter members.

Debra also thanks Jessica for her thoughtful, deep analysis of our survey data. All these efforts move forward the development of TPE's culture of philanthropy.

Debra thanks Jim for writing thank you notes and for all his leadership on the Marowski land acquisition project in the Coulee Chapter.

Debra thanks Jon for his help coordinating a \$15,000 grant request to the Stry Foundation to provide funding for a Coulee Region Chapter collaboration with the Friends of the Blufflands in La Crosse.

Evanne also recently passed along funding opportunity through Rotary International. Please let CS know of any grant or a funding opportunity you hear about. There's so many email and other list subscriptions out there that it can be difficult to track. More people looking for these opportunities is always good thing.

Debra also recognized CS staff member Nate Lee for making his first gift to TPE after overhearing a conversation between Duncan and Sarah in the office about the importance of giving.

We currently have 1,703 members and our goal this year is 1,750. This goal feels within reach. We also currently have over \$1 million in donations.

Debra reminds everyone to think who in their Chapters should be invited to the leadership collaborative that will start in 2024. It could be one or two representatives or a group of people.

Debra shares the updated accountability chart. We're now fully staffed and working on getting everyone up to speed while streamlining processes. The key change to the accountability chart is breaking out accountabilities in the Executive Director role versus an imagined Integrator role. Currently, Debra is doing both but they're two different roles with different objectives. The Executive Director is more externally focus. An Integrator is more internally focused. It really a pain point right now in the CS office.

Another people issue is the lack of a designated person to oversee and lead program work. Becky and Khris are currently swapping their roles of Lead Operations Coordinator and Operations Coordinator. Hopefully by 1/1/24 Becky will step into the Lead Operations

Coordinator position with Nate reporting to her. Khris will move fully into a land management role and report to Debra.

CRP leases – we have four sign leases. We’re starting to get questions back about our application which is a hopeful sign that they’re being reviewed.

2024 Conference – registration is going live on December 8th. CS is planning to reach out to colleges and universities who have done packages for students in the past but would love to have the help of any Board members who have personal connections with college and university professors or leaders.

Debra answers questions from Board members. Evanne would love a blurb about the leadership collaborative that she can share with her Chapter.

Nate Lee is taking over the management of burn program from Dan Carter which is really working with Chapters on the coordination of their burn programs.

F. New Business

General Board

~~1. ACTION ITEM: Vote on accepting Kay Wienke from the Southwest Chapter as a new Board Member.~~

Welcome to new Board member Kay Wienke of the Southwest Chapter (SWC). Kay devotes much of her time to the Iris Drive Prairie. She was selected by the SWC to represent SWC on the Board of Directors.

No action item necessary – the Board only needs to elect new at-large members, not representatives elected by Chapters according to their guidelines.

Land Management Committee

2. ACTION ITEM: Review and vote on Elmoville Management Plan
3. ACTION ITEM: Review and vote on Hanley Savanna Management Plan
4. ACTION ITEM: Review and vote on Adelman-Schwartz Management Plan
5. DISCUSSION: Review need for Board approval of land management plans.

Rich Henderson makes a motion to approve all three management plans presented. Jay Rutherford seconds the motion. All in favor. Motion passes.

Discussion: does the Board need to approve these plans? The LMC has the expertise and already approves the plans. Is it best use of the Board’s time to approve these plans? Jon thinks that as long as the plans are available to the Board there’s no reason to vote on

them. Rich thinks that there's value in sending them to the Board for their review. It creates a way for Board members to bring concerns to the LMC. All management plans are initiated by a Chapter. The LMC is discussing a process of reviewing old land management plans that need updating. Deanna suggests just putting the plans in the consent agenda where no additional action is required.

Executive Committee

6. ACTION ITEM: Bylaws change re: annual meeting/picnic

Executive Committee recommends changing bylaws to eliminate the annual meeting. As we have grown, it has become more geographically challenging to bring everyone together. Many Chapters are already doing their own regional picnics and annual meetings and the requirement to host is a burden for many. The Board will also be discussing another model for an event that will bring our community together during the summer, which would compete with the annual meeting and picnic.

Scott Fulton makes a motion to approve the proposed change to the bylaws. Rich Henderson seconds the motion. All in favor. Motion passes.

7. ACTION ITEM: Records Management Policy

The new policy is a rewrite of the previous records management policy we created during the accreditation renewal process. The new policy was developed to be a high-level governance policy for the organization. We want to keep the procedure of exactly what kinds of documents were kept and in which way records were kept separate from this policy. The Chapter Support team has developed a robust procedural document and a chart for tracking how records management will work for the various types of documents that we're keeping.

Evanne Hunt makes a motion to approve the new Records Management Policy. Jessica Bizub seconds the motion. All in favor. Motion Passes.

Gary mentions that he has some original documents in his possession. What are required documents that we must retain from LTA – that's what's covered by this policy. But there are likely historical documents that we want retained that fall outside of required documents. Creating a historical archive should be a future Executive Committee issue.

8. ACTION ITEM: Proven Process

Debra reviews four elements document included in the Board packet. This was developed to answer the question of "how we do it" for people of our target market (upper Midwesterners who appreciate nature in the places they live). Debra requests feedback

from the Board on the draft of the four elements: igniting relationships with the land, grassroots community, stewardship and protection.

Rich recommends amending “stewardship: working together to restore natural communities.” to “working together to maintain and restore natural communities.”

Jay recommends amending “protection: Our commitment to protecting and stewarding the land into the future.” To “stewarding the land now and into the future.”

Gary wonders if we need to be more specific than “land.” It’s suggested to add those specifics about which types of lands we mean at deeper levels of information beyond the four elements.

This will get further review at the retreat. No need for action at this time.

9. ACTION ITEM: Signing Authority Policy

The policy for review is a stop gap because we realized that we didn't have anything, at least that we could find in writing, which documented signing authority and backups for signing key documents in the organization. We also want to note that we have bigger issues around signing in the organization which we would like to address through the update of the accounting manual, Treasurer's Handbook, and some other policy work that we have planned for 2024.

Harvey Halverson makes a motion to approve the Signing Authority Policy. Scott Fulton seconds the motion. All in favor. Motion passes.

Education Committee

10. ACTION ITEM: Review and vote on Education Committee’s recommendation to hold a yearly virtual conference and develop annual in-person summer event(s) composed of field trips, hands-on workshop, presentations, and networking opportunities.

Jessica shares the Education Committee discussion around how to do the annual conference. The main pro to going online is many more people can attend it, we can attract a wide range of presenters and can record the presentations for future use. The main con is the lack of in-person contact and conversations.

The Education Committee recommends a move to in-person events during summer when we can do in-field, hands-on activities.

Interested Chapters could take the lead on event coordination with plenty of help from the Education Committee. Chapter Support would also be providing support and logistics.

This could be a discussion for the leadership collaborative re: Chapters involvement. Given the logistics involved and the change from holding an annual picnic, it will be wise to have more discussions around how these summer events would be executed and to keep them smaller in 2024.

Rich Henderson makes a motion to accept the Education Committee recommendation to hold a yearly virtual conference and develop annual in-person summer event(s) composed of field trips, hands-on workshop, presentations, and networking opportunities. Gary Eldred seconds the motion. All in favor. Motion carries.

G. Adjourn

Jerry Newman makes a motion to adjourn. Jay Rutherford seconds the motion. All in favor. Motion carries. Meeting is at adjourned at 9:16pm.