

Flathead Audubon Society Board of Directors Meeting (online) 2/1/2021  
Minutes Prepared by: Pam Willison, Secretary

Directors participating: Gael Bissell, Jan Metzmaker, Derrick Rathe, Mike Fanning, Pam Willison, Bob Lee, Cory Davis, Darcy Thomas, Rod Walette, Jake Bramante, Margaret Parodi, Dave Manuwal, Cindy Roberts, Tom Roberts, Carole Jorgensen, Joe Batts

Others participating: Denny Olson

The meeting was called to order by President Gael Bissell at 6:05 pm.

**Minutes:** Margaret offered a couple corrections. Jan made a motion to approve as corrected; Mike seconded. Motion passed unanimously.

**Financials:** Rod reported there was nothing out of the ordinary on the report of monthly banking and memberships. He noted that our investments dropped slightly the past month. Memberships are at 210 and may be slightly ahead of last year. The check register was just the normal activity. He put \$500 in the Postal Service for newsletters throughout the year. He clarified to board members for FAS expenses, that they can either scan an invoice and email to him, or submit the actual receipt. Gael also commented that we disbursed the \$2000 donation to Flathead Land Trust for the Danforth Project. Cory made a motion to accept and file the financial reports; Bob seconded. Motion passed unanimously.

### **Committee Reports:**

**Membership:** Cory reported that they met last week and are talking through the needs, reviewing how the process currently works, and exploring the options for new software to handle the project. They will develop criteria to use to evaluate each software option. Denny inquired about the status of the change to calendar year, and Mike confirmed that is still in their plan. Also, Mike noted that he and Linda suggest that we discontinue the monthly donation acknowledgments in the PP, and replace it with a cumulative one at the end of the year. There was general agreement that seemed to be fine, and is consistent with other non-profits.

**Financial Committee:** Rod reported that they met last week. The primary focus was preparing for a meeting with Whitefish Community Foundation (WFCF) regarding an investment account with them, and also possibly setting up an endowment fund through WFCF. They identified other items that need to be addressed sooner, such as formation of a financial plan. Rod met with our accountant Kim, and they worked to get our financial records ready and accurate, in order to prepare both 2019 and 2020 tax returns. They also corrected some records in past years, that needed adjusting. Rod is in the process of finding a qualified person to complete our tax return, so it's ready to include with the 2021 Great Fish application. At the suggestion of the accountant, Rod used an online service to complete the 1099 for Denny, rather than buying a whole package of them, and just using one. Gael asked about Josh Covill, and Rod confirmed

that his earnings were small enough that he didn't need a 1099. Rod is also working on the renewal of our current liability and accident insurance policy with Pachner and Assoc., which is based on the number of participants we have. They agreed to start us at the minimum coverage, which covers 3 events/20 people, and will raise it as we have more events. This will save some money because it will be \$421 rather than over \$800. They also needed to see our waiver form, and it needed to have COVID information. Margaret made the COVID changes on the form; Bob Lee, and an attorney reviewed it, so it's done. Rod contacted a local insurance agent who suggested we bundle our three policies with one insurer, and Rod will plan for that next year because some policies have already been paid, and we would lose money by switching at this point.

Investments are also an issue discussed, and the committee identified the need for an investment strategy which includes identifying the risk level we are willing to have. The Finance Committee will prepare some documentation about these, then bring them to the Board. Also, Rod has some complications with handling two of the investment funds we have because it's done online. Rod will investigate some local options, and the Finance Committee will include that information in the financial plan and guiding documents they prepare. Carole inquired about whether there will be any consideration of whether the investments are with socially responsible companies. Rod confirmed that was part of the discussion with the Finance Committee, and it would be included in future conversations. Carole inquired about the motivation of having a local company. Rod said the two online companies are challenging to access, and the process of withdrawing funds is cumbersome. Also, Rod feels there are advantages with working with a person he has met and can visit or call. Carole also inquired about the fees charged, and Rod said they all should be comparable, but we will be careful to not select any agency that charges fees that are significantly higher. Gael mentioned that as a result of the meeting, Joe will be preparing a draft Charter for the Finance Committee, which will guide their responsibilities. He will base it on the Montana Audubon charter. Gael said part of future discussions be directed toward identifying the designated purpose for any endowment we establish. Gael also mentioned that there could be some strategic planning activities in the future for the Board, related to all of the topics that came up in the Finance Committee.

**Great Fish:** Gael mentioned that Kay is still seeking input on the second question she distributed, so she can compose an answer for our application.

**Field Trips:** Kathy and Margaret have been proceeding with planning. Kathy feels that we need something in writing that specifies that our field trips will not be over 10. Darcy has agreed to do a trip on March 6 on Holt Bridge Trail. Freezout is March 26-27 with Bob. Laura Katzman from FLT is planning an event in May in the Lower Valley area viewing the Danforth and Somers Beach projects. Also, Margaret talked to Laura about a late summer event at Bad Rock Canyon project. Dan Casey is also interested in leading some events, and Denny is planning an early spring event in OSNA. There is interest in Warbler Weekend at Tally Lake. Bob mentioned that there will be a State Festival on one of the first two weekends in June. Usually the Tally Lake event is scheduled to avoid State Festival, and Bob says they should know the date for State

Festival on Friday, and they will let Mike know so he can reserve the Tally Lake group site, and then we will see how things are going with COVID. There was discussion confirming how critical it is to keep numbers low (10), and have strict COVID guidelines. Denny commented that 10 people in single file, distanced and with masks, was somewhat cumbersome on his OSNA field trip. In response to this, Darcy offered to do 2 different trips of only 5 people – one Saturday, and one on a weekday. Gael also suggested with the trip with FLT, that it be held in two separate groups that start at different times, so there is a gap.

**Programs:** On Feb 8<sup>th</sup> Doug Bonham will cover instrumented bird boxes and other tracking technology. For March, Franz Ingelfinger will present on Trumpeter Swans. April is still open, but he has an option he is pursuing. In May, Charles van Rees will be presenting.

**Conservation:** Gael referred to the letter to the editor by Jim Vashro about how important Habitat Montana is to insuring access and open lands in the Flathead. Gael mentioned HB5 in the state legislature that would reauthorize funding for Habitat Montana and said she will sign for FAS on the Montana Audubon's support letter, as requested. Gael asked for people who would be willing to help monitor some of the legislative actions and issue comments for FAS. Amy from Montana Audubon is trying to keep chapters informed every couple of weeks, but there are things that could be done in between. Carole wondered if we feel there is any effect from what we do, and whether we are using up our energy. Gael said she realizes there is a limit to what we can do as an organization because comments can take some time to prepare. But she feels like we should not sit silently during the 2021 legislature. Pam, Carole, Dave, and Jan agreed to be added to the Montana Audubon alerts. Gael (or Cory, if Gael is unavailable) would have to sign off on any letters, comments, or testimony coming from FAS. She is looking for people to stay current on bills and issues, and identify items where we should comment, and there is adequate time to respond, on the bills or issues. For major issues, we can notify members in a fly-by notice, or place that information on our website. Carole recommends creating a list of the bills and the deadline for comments and readings, and whether we support or not, and why. Bob said that Montana Audubon does that on their website. Gael just wants some help to keep current, sort, and prioritize. Pam mentioned that MEIC also tracks bills and gives good summaries, so is a good resource for alerts.

**OSNA:** Pam reported she is going to complete the grant application for FCD, for assistance with weed control. She noted that the timing of the application and the time frame for using the money has changed, so the application is due April 30 and if we are approved, we could start using it in July. She will be looking to apply for a couple thousand dollars, which is how much we got 2 years ago (the maximum is \$5000).

**Publicity:** Regarding looking for help on keeping the calendar on Facebook current, Denny has texted Shannon Donaldson, but hasn't heard back. Gael suggests a small request in the PP, if that doesn't work out with Shannon. Jake clarified that we don't want someone to engage in sharing and generating materials, but just keeping our events posted on the calendar so it mirrors the calendar on the website. Denny will follow up. Denny contacted Nancy Gresham regarding publicity volunteer work, possibly helping publicize the videos, but he doubts she's

interested in the Facebook work. Jake also mentioned that he updated the website with the information on the videos, and added some links, and he also cleaned up the donation link. Jake and Linda have identified that they use different mailing lists, and would like to use the same one. The problem is that Linda provides both an attachment and a link for the newsletter, and should she use Mail Chimp, which Jake uses, you can't have attachments. It was felt that having only a link would be adequate, but the first few times need to include an explanation of the change.

**Nominations:** Bob reminded that nominations are coming up, and he is looking for candidates. Dan Casey is interested in running as a Director, and plans to join some meetings in the next couple months.

**Education:** Cindy reported they are looking to have a meeting in the next few weeks to discuss marketing and promotion of education materials. Denny said they also will be discussing strategy during COVID, and also an exit strategy for when COVID restrictions are over. Denny said some of the things they will need for promotion will involve Jake and the website. Denny said he is talking to 7<sup>th</sup> grade teachers, and their content is fairly set through the end of the school year, so they would have to fit our videos into existing plans.

**Pileated Post:**

\*Linda will ask Dan Casey to fill in on the birds in the valley when Josh is not available.

\*Bob will put in a request for nominations.

\*Dan Casey will be the person to provide information about Hawk Watch.

\*Cory will review the program recordings and see if they are adequate to use, and will provide information to Linda and Jake if they are.

\*Lewis has a conservation topic. Gael has not contacted Constanza, but Carole has, and Constanza is willing to provide some information, but she needs some guidance, and the organization is still working on its purpose. Carole suggests we hold off a couple months.

\*Mike confirmed that the full amount given for membership fees and donations is tax-deductible because we don't give anything of value in response. Mike can find the IRS code for Linda for the newsletter.

\*Margaret will provide field trip information.

\*Gael will provide information about responding to legislative issues, along with Carole.

\*Regarding action and news on the national level, Carole suggests that we let it ride a while because so much is in flux, and there are numerous lawsuits. She suggests referring people to the website for National Audubon. Carole will write a small article about where people can check to stay current and informed.

Bob mentioned that the Bitterroot chapter was holding their online meeting and near the end they got hacked by someone showing racial and pornographic material so the leader shut down all video to avoid exposing people. It was the first time they had advertised their link in their newsletter. Because the culprit joined late in the meeting, they have decided to not let anyone join after the first 15 minutes. Jake said we are trying to avoid this by having people contact us for the link, rather than publishing it.

Cory will be presiding over the March 1 meeting, so get material and agenda items to him.

Mike made a motion to adjourn, Jan seconded. Motion was unanimous. Meeting adjourned at 7:56 pm