

Flathead Audubon Board of Directors Meeting (online) 3/1/2021
Prepared by: Pam Willison, Secretary

Members participating: Cory Davis, Rod Walette, Pam Willison, Bob Lee, Carole Jorgensen, Margaret Parodi, Mike Fanning, Gael Bissell, Kay Mitchell, Jake Bramante, Jan Metzmaker, Cindy Roberts, Tom Roberts, Joe Batts, Dave Manuwal, Will Beyer

Others participating: Denny Olson, Dan Casey, Jill Fanning

The meeting was called to order to 6:05 pm by Vice-President Cory Davis.

Minutes: No changes, Dave made a motion to accept, and Mike seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

Financial: Rod recapped the February Board Financial Report. The market remains strong, so our investments are doing well. Memberships continue to come in. There isn't much activity in the checking account because it's a slow time of year. Cory asked about the disbursement to the bridge club and whether it's a one-time payment, or a repeating payment. Rod confirmed that it was a one-time donation in appreciation of making their facility available for our meetings.

Rod has contacted 8 people or entities about preparing our tax return. He narrowed it down for various reasons, and Bryan Gilbertson, CPA, appears to be the best option. He works with other non-profits, and the prices he quoted to Rod were reasonable. The Executive Committee reviewed the information and agreed that Rod should make the arrangements with Bryan Gilbertson.

Jennifer Graham requested a tax donation receipt for the high-end spotting scope she donated. Rod did research for an estimated value, and for our reporting requirements. The new tax law only requires us to provide a confirmation that the donation was received, and determination of the value of in-kind donations, such as this, is between the donor and the IRS, so he sent her a letter to that effect. As a result, Rod learned how to handle in-kind donations, how to record them on our books, and whether to capitalize them on our financial records. Kim Orr, our current CPA, suggested we set a maximum value for in-kind donations, and she suggested \$2500. For comparison, Rod checked with Whitefish Community Foundation (WFCF) and they use \$1000 for their cut-off. Rod found that the used value of the scope package was about \$1800. Rod feels having an asset of a spotting scope or other donated items capitalized on our books is outside the intent of assets, so he feels the \$2500 cut-off amount would serve our organization better and we won't end up with odd items listed as assets. This information would be included in the financial policy he is writing.

Denny reminded Margaret that the aforementioned spotting scope is available to people who are doing field trips. The logistics of getting the scope to field trip leaders needs to be worked out. Margaret questioned the COVID safety of shared equipment, and Denny said he provides

wipes to clean between people. Dan Casey mentioned that he has a phone adapter for his scope and then people can stand back and view the bird on his phone screen. It was noted that these adapters are specific to the phone and scope.

Kay made a motion to accept and file the financial reports. Jake seconded. Motion passed unanimously.

Rod also reported on the training session he joined through the WFCF about financial plans and policy. He noted that many of the participants are from organizations with staff and personnel and we don't have that. Based on the information he received through the training, he has started writing our Financial Policy. As a result of the training, he realizes that we are doing many things incorrectly, and he is going to propose a number of changes, to ensure security in handling our money and financial records. One will be separation of duties related to receiving money. Pam has agreed to begin collecting the mail and logging the receipt of all checks before they go to Rod to enter in our books and deposit. Another change would be having a separate person prepare the bank reconciliation, and Rod has asked Kay if she would be willing to do that. Once Rod has a draft Financial Policy document ready, the Finance Committee will begin work on it, but he will distribute the draft document to the full Board so everyone is well informed. This document will be an active document, to be reviewed every year, which guides all financial actions and decisions. The next training through WFCF is Treasurer Boot Camp, covering the responsibilities of the Treasurer, and Rod will participate. Cory will send out a poll to the Finance Committee about possible dates for a meeting the end of March or early April. Joe also mentioned that the Charter for the Finance Committee should be included on the agenda for that meeting, and he will have a draft prepared for the Committee. Gael asked Pam if this arrangement is something that will work for her, and she confirmed that she and Rod had discussed it, and have already set up some operational procedures to get the change in place.

Membership: Cory reported the membership committee met again. Ultimately, the decision that has come out of the meetings, is to set up and migrate information to a membership management program called Little Green Light, in order to test it and confirm that it will work for us. If acceptable, this would be the system for recording and using membership data. Mike emphasized that it's important that the Membership Chair position, which he is leaving, be filled ASAP so the new person can be involved from the beginning of this change-over. He encouraged Board members who are interested to step forward, or to search for someone to fill that position. Cory said that filling that position will be added to the agenda of future meetings of the membership committee.

Artwork Donation: Tom Pullen of Columbia Falls has offered to donate a limited-edition print(s) of cardinals, by David Chapple. Gael will get a photo of the artwork and circulate it to people to see if we want to accept the donation, and feels we need to have a plan for how to use the print, such as a raffle or auction. On a related note, Joe mentioned that he still has the 2 Audubon art books that were donated, and could also be considered for raffle or auction.

Great Fish: Kay offered thanks to people who provided answers to the Great Fish application questions she circulated. She will use them and continue working on the application. Kay also mentioned that today is the first day applications are accepted for the Day of Giving on May 4-5, which is coordinated by WFCF. Kay offered to complete the application, should the Board feel we want to participate in the Day of Giving again, and mentioned that the financial reports they request are less stringent than Great Fish. Applications are due by April 15, and then there is a review process to determine people who will participate. It is our responsibility to solicit donations by notifying people we are participating, and to write the thank-you notes. Rod noted that we made over \$7000 last year through this. Kay made a motion that we apply to participate in the WFCF Day of Giving. Mike seconded. Motion passed unanimously.

Field Trips: Margaret reported that March has several field trips scheduled, and in April Cory will do West Valley Ponds, Denny will do OSNA, and Dan Casey will do some walks outside Somers. In May Laura Katzman (FLT), and Kathy Ross will be leading trips. Margaret asked about Warbler Weekend, and Mike reported that he checked and no weekend dates are available for the group site at Tally Lake. As a fallback, Mike did reserve a mid-week date of May 19-20. Dan feels the May 19-20 dates are a little early. Bob reported that the Montana Audubon Festival will be June 4-5, even though the format is uncertain, and he feels that weekdays are not a problem for most people who want to participate. Dan noted that mid-week of the first or second week of June would be the optimal times, and that there is a real benefit to camping over day trips, because of access to early morning birding. Jake checked the Tally Lake reservation page and reported the open weekday dates in early June, and June 9-10 was chosen. Mike will change the reservation to those dates and will send a message to us to confirm.

Jan reminded that for any field trips, you should not list the meeting location, so that each participant must contact the trip leader and sign up and get the information. This avoids having people showing up at the location without registering for the trip.

May meeting: The general feeling was that it cannot be held as an in-person meeting. Dave confirmed that the presentation will be conducted virtually. It was confirmed that no reservation will be made for the Whitefish location.

Dave needs guidance for the fall meetings so he can work to arrange speakers. He sees 3 options: In-person, all virtual, or an in-person meeting with a virtual speaker. Jake said he is interested in finding a way to broadcast a presentation, and that he and Denny will work on that as an option. This would allow Dave to make arrangements for presentations that are either in-person, or virtual. Gael feels we should make some room reservations for the fall for the larger conference room, and Dave will check into it. The upcoming April presentation will be on a raven study in Yellowstone.

Education: Cindy reported that the Education Committee met and reviewed the plans for promotion of the videos and educational resources associated with them. Denny reported that he has been investing significant time in transforming his PowerPoints to narrated

presentations to make them available as education resources. He's working with Jake on how to condense them down into ZIP files, so they are easier to send. Cindy reported the Committee is meeting again in a couple weeks, and this meeting is a review of the past year. Denny reported that he has been in contact with Shannon and Bridger Donaldson about taking over keeping our Facebook page calendar of events. Denny also reported that he has arranged with Nancy Gresham to assist with the promotion activities for the education resources. Denny reported that he has not heard of any events for Forestry Expo, and that the Earth Day activity was folded and taken over by a different organization and he hasn't been contacted. Denny fears there will be short notice on some of these events, and we may need to use a fly-by notice for them. Bob Lee said he has a contact about the Forestry Expo and he will check on it.

Conservation: Gael asked for feedback from the Board about the article that was in the newsletter about tracking legislative activity, and whether they feel it had an effect. Jake said the placement on the website was intended to draw attention to it. Dan commented that the best thing might be to educate people at the local level, and he feels that our comments and letters are not going to have much effect.

Carole said that she's challenged to keep current with the legislature, because of the volume of bills they are producing and the quantity of them that are negative toward animal, habitat, and the environment. Carole sent information about the final comments ending soon, on the Migratory Bird Treaty Act. She feels it might actually be better to have a new law that is written more clearly.

Denny mentioned that there is an issue at Echo Lake about housing density, and letters should go to the County Commissioners. He also noted that Amy at Montana Audubon is doing a good job of sorting the bills and listing ways to comment. Carole said it's a challenge to know when and how to comment because of the volume and the speed at which they are going through.

OSNA: Denny is putting together a crew to work on eradication efforts of Common Buckthorn. He will work with Pat Jaquith to identify and do some marking (on the non-visible side) prior to the work crew. Denny helped Mike and Sally Russell identify a large amount of Buckthorn of their property, which adjoins OSNA. Common Buckthorn is finally being identified as a pervasive problem in the valley. Carole wondered about sharing information by participating in the Free the Seeds event that is coming up. Gael feels their agenda is already set, but we could do something in the PP. Denny said Pat Jaquith will be doing a presentation at the upcoming Native Plant Society. Dan commented that it's pervasive on the Yellowstone River too, and he said it's well recognized as a problem in the mid-west where they are spending lots of money on it to get it under control. Denny said anyone who wants to help, should contact him. Gael wondered about needing to have a licensed applicator help set up the program in order to use glyphosate. Derrick Rathe holds a license, and we should be able to have him set up the program, and to have a letter on file from him. Denny also intends to have a standard personal injury waiver for anyone working. Rod confirmed that is a good idea from an insurance perspective.

PR: Our website is up to date. Jan is keeping current PR on the field trips. Jake will work with Shannon and Bridger on our Facebook calendar. When used, the content for the fly-by notices needs to be short and sweet so people don't get fatigued from them and unsubscribe.

Bird Help Section: Gael would like to see a section of our website that carries information about things people can do to be helpful to birds. Jake commented that all the articles related to this topic are within our newsletters. He and Linda Winnie have discussed creating a website location where that information is pulled out and consolidated. It would take someone putting in the effort to locate them. Gael said she and Linda would work on it.

Pileated Post: All the items with questions have been covered in prior conversations tonight.

National Bird Friendly Week is mid-April and Gael wondered if we wanted to do something related to that. Jake suggested getting the Bird Help page set up this coming week, then use that as our promotion item for this event. Gael suggested putting the upcoming article by Kathy Ross under a prominent banner for Bird Friendly Week, and Jake confirmed that can be done.

Kay encourages people to tune in next week for the meeting on Monday, which will include a PowerPoint Cory made for the Conservation Achievement Recognition award, in addition to the program about Trumpeter Swans.

Jake made a motion to adjourn. Bob seconded. Motion passed unanimously. Meeting adjourned at 8:03.