

Flathead Audubon BOD meeting, Lone Pine Pavilion, May 3, 2021  
Prepared by: Pam Willison, Secretary

Directors present: Gael Bissell, Cory Davis, Rod Walette, Pam Willison, Jan Metzmaker, Margaret Parodi, Jake Bramante, Carole Jorgensen, Will Beyer, Tom Roberts, Cindy Roberts, Dave Manuwal

Others present: Denny Olson, Dan Casey

The meeting was called to order by President Gael Bissell at 6:08 pm.

**Minutes:** One minor spelling change. Jan made a motion to accept the minutes with the correction; Carole seconded; motion passed unanimously.

**Financials:** Rod reviewed the fund balances report that was distributed to the BOD. Investment fund balances continue to be very strong. Memberships continue to trickle in, and are comparable to last year. PayPal is being used to pay 43% of the memberships, an increase.

The checkbook activity report was reviewed by Rod. Per an inquiry to Rod by Jake, in the future Rod will also distribute a report of the bank reconciliation, in addition to this activity report. Cory made a motion to accept and file the reports; Jan seconded; motion passed unanimously.

Rod led the presentation regarding the draft of the Financial Policy, and the Budget for the coming year. These documents were compiled, reviewed and edited by the Finance Committee. Dave asked if the current version of the document varies substantially from the initial document distributed to the BOD earlier. Rod confirmed that it was modified to change some wording and to add and delete some items, in order to make it specific to FAS.

**Budget for 2021-2022:** Rod provided an explanation on any items that varied notably from the 20-21 budget. Some differences are related to activity that occurred last year, but won't this year, such as the COVID grants. Jake inquired about how we would handle one-time large donations, such as for Bad Rock. Rod said that if those donations are approved by the BOD, they need to indicate where the funds will be taken. Gael commented there were few budget items changed from last year, and all our programs were still funded.

Dave made a motion to accept the 2021-22 budget; Cindy seconded; no additional discussion; motion carried unanimously.

**Financial Policy:** Rod presented each item that required BOD input and discussion, and/or action for approval:

\*Operating Reserve Fund – Rod feels this isn't an item we have had any issues with in the past, but is a recommended practice that would be good to establish in the Policy. This requires us to have a 3-month operating reserve in our cash account at all times, and should it drop below that level, it needs to be replenished. Carole asked whether this can be held in an investment,

or needs to be in checking, and Rod confirmed that it needs to be in a cash account. There are a couple places where the replenishing funds can be drawn from, including savings or short-term liquid investments. A motion is not required on this item.

\*Financial Reviewer – Rod reviewed the responsibilities of the Reviewer, and said that Kay is ready to fulfill that role, and has the background and skills, and that her computer is set up to handle QuickBooks. Jan made a motion to approve appointing Kay Mitchell to the position of Financial Reviewer; Cory seconded; no further discussion; motion carried unanimously. Rod clarified that this appointment stands until Kay is replaced, and does not need to be made annually.

\*Investment fund minimum balances – Information provided by Whitefish Community Foundation recommends that we have a 3-year operating balance based on our annual budget. That amount would be the minimum amount to be held in investments and cash accounts. This does not require a motion and vote by the Board. Cory asked about the action needed should we look to make a large donation that would require taking money from investments. Rod read the section of the Policy that covers the BOD approval for transferring significant funds from investments. There was discussion about the need to be specific about what amount is “significant”. However, it was agreed it could be left as worded. Cory also asked that our fiscal year (July – June) and tax year (Jan – Dec) be specified in this document. It will be added in the opening statement.

\*Location of investment funds – Rod feels the investment funds should be consolidated rather than distributed to various management organizations (we currently use 3). The BOD has had a discussion about this in the past and there were no issues with the idea of consolidating, and there was understanding about the benefits. Rod reviewed the background and qualifications of Dan Short of Merrell Lynch, which is who he recommends we use as our financial advisor to consolidate our investments. There were no questions or issues with this recommendation. Tom made a motion to close the investment accounts at Edward Jones, Vanguard, and Domini and move control of these investments to Merrell Lynch, with Dan Short as our financial advisor; Carole seconded. Discussion was held about the most beneficial way for these changes to be made so avoid fees. Rod said he has already discussed this with Dan Short, and most investments will transfer without having to un-invest and re-invest. Carole would like to see the new advisor provide a monthly itemization of the fees. Jake suggested that we move the transfer forward, and then monitor the fees and see if there a need for discussion about the fees in the future. Motion carried unanimously.

\*Percentages of Investments in equity (stocks), bonds, and short-term/liquid accounts – Rod pointed out that our existing percentages are positioned very aggressively for growth, which is why they are doing so well. However, there is a higher risk exposure in this position. Jake asked how often we should review the percentages, in order to rebalance our percentages. Rod said he feels that is the responsibility of the financial advisor. Jake recommends that we put a time frame on it, so it causes him to do it at a certain interval. Carole feels that specific times may not correspond to market activity, so that it be less specific. Rod feels comfortable with asking for the financial advisor review quarterly. No BOD vote is required on this item, and the percentages listed in the Policy will be the given to Dan Short to use in managing our investments.

\*Investing money with Whitefish Community Foundation – the Finance Committee felt this was a good idea to show support of their work. Jan made a motion to invest \$50,000 with Whitefish Community Foundation; Jake seconded; no discussion; motion carried unanimously.

\*Rod noted that the Policy calls for the BOD to review the Year-end Financial Reports, and these won't be completed until fall, and will be brought to the BOD at that time. The Finance Committee reviews the Tax Return when it is completed.

\*Jan made a motion to accept the Financial Policy as written, including the minor adjustments mentioned in the discussions above; Cory seconded; motion carried unanimously.

**Educational Strategic Plan for 2021-2022** – Cindy highlighted the main products and results from the past year of work, and listed the additions made to the Plan for the coming year. There is a strong focus on working with the 7<sup>th</sup> grade education program, and in working with the Native Plant Society. Dave made a motion to approve the Educational Strategic Plan for 2021-2022, and to offer Denny Olson a contract for 2021-2022, based on the Strategic Plan goals. Jake seconded the motion. Motion carried unanimously.

**Bad Rock Conservation Easement** – Jake made a motion that we donate \$5000 to Flathead Land Trust for the acquisition of the land for the Bad Rock Conservation Easement. Margaret seconded the motion. Discussion revealed a desire to make a larger donation because of the importance and value of this location. Jake suggested that we donate the \$5000 and then consider a donation toward a future infrastructure project. Rod clarified that the funds would come from cash balances. Cory made a motion to amend the motion to a \$7500 donation. Carole seconded the amendment. The amendment passed unanimously. The vote on the original motion to donate to the FLT conservation easement at Bad Rock canyon passed unanimously.

**Day of Giving:** It starts tomorrow, and Jake will send out a Fly-by notice tomorrow. Denny wanted clarification about whether it's better to donate through WCF because of the potential matching funds, or to donate directly to FAS. It was agreed that donations through WCF are more beneficial.

**Birds Of Prey Festival** – Denny updated that Kate Davis has agreed to be the main speaker, Nancy Gresham has agreed to coordinate the publicity, and Dan Casey has agreed to do a session on raptor ID. Denny plans to hold a coordinating meeting in late May or early June for the organizing/volunteer group. This group will also address any special arrangements related to COVID guidelines.

**Fall (In-person) Meeting** – Dave will coordinate the special preparations, such as chair spacing, sanitizing stations, etc. We should be hearing soon about availability of the rooms.

**Jewel Basin Hawk Watch** – Gael confirmed that we have \$3000 set aside for a contract for a technician to serve as the primary. Dan Casey will contact Josh Covill and seek a firm commitment from him about the number of days he would cover. Gael feels that if we paid more per day, that it might be more appealing to someone to sign a contract and said Dan can

work within the allocated \$3000 however he needs to secure a contract. Dan said that bad weather toward the end of the season has presented a challenge to fulfill the specified number of days in a contract for the past 3 years. He also noted that the group of volunteers for Hawk Watch has increased and has helped fill the schedule. Dave made a motion that we offer a contract for a Jewel Basin Hawk Watch technician, not to exceed a total of \$3000 for the season; Jake seconded; motion passed unanimously.

**Field Trips:** The new field trip liability form is being used, and attendance numbers go to Margaret, and the form (or a scan) goes to Rod for insurance purposes. Membership is also involved because the form also contains email addresses (if offered). Fall field trips are unknown at this point.

**Membership:** Jake reported that the Little Green Light (LGL) software is being evaluated for the membership data, and he is trying to resolve any problems before switching over. Dan Cotter submitted an application for the Chairmanship of the Membership Committee, as a result of the ad Mike Fanning placed in the newsletter.

**BOD** – Derrick Rathe is willing to serve for 3 more years and Darcy Thomas, who replaced someone to finish a term, so would be up for reelection. New candidates include: Dan Cotter could be on the BOD as a result of being Membership Chair, and Dan Casey, who is seeking to rejoin the BOD. Kay Mitchell would also move from the Executive Committee to being a position on the BOD.

**OSNA** – Gael brought up the topic of noticeable and frequent helicopter noise near OSNA, which has been reported by several FAS members and our concern for the effect on birds establishing nesting sites, in particular the Osprey, Eagles, Herons, and Cormorants. She also had a call from a landowner on the east side of the river who was concerned. Several FAS members have reported experiencing the noise for several hours at a time. Denny made a positive identification that it is a Two Bear Air helicopter, and it's suspected they are doing training activity on the river. Discussion resulted in a suggestion to hold a conversation with Two Bear Air and express our concern and see what the response is. Denny and Cory will make that contact. Gael will contact some of the Greenridge and Howard residents to see what they know. Carole suggested there be some reference to the terms of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act.

Margaret made a motion to adjourn; Carole seconded the motion. The meeting was adjourned at 8:00 pm.