

TOS Board Meeting - January 26, 2022

Present: Christine Turnbull, Kendra Kocab, Shelia Hargis, Susan Foster, Gailon Brehm, Frances Cerbins, D. D. Currie, Clay Taylor, John Berner, Byron Stone, Randy Pinkston

Not present: Laura Wilson

Meeting started 7:05 PM

Minutes approval

Francis motioned to approve the July minutes. Gailon seconded. Motion passed. Susan Foster moved to accept October minutes as written. Francis Cerbins seconded. Motion passed.

Financial Report

Treasurer John Berner discussed two documents. 2021 profits were higher than expected, but membership renewals were low. Money collected from Sabine Woods was back up close to pre-COVID numbers. More was spent on legal activities and Sabine Woods expenses than budgeted. Magic Ridge expenses went down some due to a change in the water usage. Website domain fees are higher due to paying in advance for 3 years of Linux hosting, 5 years of SSL, and 9 years of protection. Shelia Hargis said if we aren't going to use Neon's fundraising capabilities, we should go back down to the cheaper subscription level. Gailon Brehm said we are essentially breaking even the last several years which doesn't leave much room for doing anything new. John will work on the 2022 budget using 2021 as a base.

Investments

Gailon Brehm went over our financial holdings. The stock market is currently crashing, so we are down 4% from the last meeting, which is just part of investing in the stock market. Long term, our investments are solid and have grown significantly in the last 2.5 years. He suggested taking 5% of our assets to help pay for an Executive Director (ED), which can be done without losing money. An ED would then help increase revenue. John Berner suggested using some of the funds to purchase more sanctuary land.

Nominating Committee

Gailon said the nominating committee has an excellent slate of candidates for this year's election, including 3 incumbents (Laura, Clay, and Christine) plus Romey Swanson. Gailon will have the ballot ready by March and proceed with the election.

January and May Meetings

Christine Turnbull said the January meeting committee was small and worked well together, but several factors contributed to the decision to cancel. Christine received 32 positive comments and 2 negative comments about the cancellation. She now wishes we had included language about the possibility of canceling. We hope to have the Abilene meeting in January 2023.

The Meeting Planning Committee met on January 24 to discuss if we should have a May meeting in Lake Jackson with GCBO. The main idea is to honor Dennis Shepler and auction off his books and paintings. GCBO and committee members feel that a live auction component is

important. Therefore, we are moving forward with the Spring meeting. In case of cancellation, it will be rescheduled for Spring 2023. Byron Stone advocated minimizing in-person activities.

Grant Requests

Kendra Kocab discussed the need to adopt policies for awarding research grants. She agreed to chair a Grant Awards Committee and John Berner expressed an interest in helping.

Sanctuary Committees

Shelia Hargis said money remaining from the Great Texas Birding Classic grant will be used for two smaller water features, a barrier to block the birds' view of the boardwalk from the current water feature, and a fence to protect prairie areas. Shelia said we need to purchase some tools for bamboo control and recommended paying a Houston Audubon intern \$20 a week to check on Hooks Woods. Byron Stone moved for approval of Shelia's budget request of a weedeater (\$150), 2 rootslayers (\$80) and up to \$500 a year for an intern to check on Hooks 2-4 times per month. Clay Taylor seconded. The motion passed. The Sanctuary or Membership Committee will work on creating a QR code in addition to envelopes for people to pay sanctuary fees.

For the Steve Gross Memorial, Dave Dolan hired the contractor that did Houston Audubon's boardwalks. Costs are nearly \$8000 more than was raised for the memorial. Sheila recommended TOS commit to paying some of these costs given the great improvement the blind would provide. Byron Stone moved that TOS offer Dave Dolan \$3900 for the memorial. TOS will make efforts to raise this from members, and all money raised will also go toward the memorial. Shelia Hargis seconded. The motion passed.

John Berner said John Wittle would like to raise fees to \$10 at Sabine Woods. There is also a plan in the works to potentially acquire land around Sabine.

Byron Stone said the lot sale is close to being finalized at Magic Ridge. There will be a workday soon to add plants provided by an anonymous donor.

Membership Committee

Francis Cerbins said the committee recommends upgrading the website. They approached Cheryl, a marketing person who has worked with TOS in the past. She will do the upgrade for \$1500. There will be some additional annual upkeep costs and a possible change of domain host. Francis proposes a committee to work on the website. Byron Stone moved for approval of \$1500 to hire Cheryl to upgrade the website. Christine seconded. The motion passed.

Francis also recommended starting a committee to research hiring an ED, but some board members think our revenue is too low. The board will first discuss the vision for this organization. Francis and Shelia will work on forming the committee.

We will reconvene in early March and discuss a date for a Board Retreat.

Meeting ended 9:45 PM