

Association for Conservation Information

BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING

July 7, 2014

Nebraska City, Nebraska

Call to Order: President Don King called the meeting to order

Roll Call (Micah Holmes): Scott Ball (Florida), Phil Bloom (Indiana), Rachel Bradley (Texas), Tom Cadden (Arizona), Kathy Garza-Behr (Ohio), Micah Holmes (Oklahoma), Don King (Tennessee), Regina Knauer (Missouri), Judy Stokes Webber (New Hampshire), Randy Zellers (Arkansas).
Absent: Robin Cahoon (Utah), Jamey Emmert (Ohio), Mark Martinez (Utah), Rachel Piacenza (RBFF).

2014 Conference Update (Jane Gustafson): Jane welcomed the officers and board to Nebraska and reported the conference had about 75 registrants so far with some one-day signups expected. The only glitch in the conference schedule was cancellation of the morning fishing trips due to safety concerns due to recent flooding.

Approval of Minutes: Scott Ball moved to approve the minutes of the May 20, 2014 board meeting with one minor edit; Tom Cadden second. Motion passed.

Treasurer's Report (Judy Stokes Weber): Judy reported opening a temporary account to pay bills after receiving \$500 from former treasurer, Chuck Schlueter. She has since opened a business checking account in New Hampshire, which required considerable documentation to create, including an IRS approval letter that demonstrates ACI is a 501-c-3 organization and an affidavit signed by Don King noting that Judy was authorized to open the account. The account was opened with proceeds from the Utah Conference, after which Judy closed the previous account and transferred those funds on 12/2/2013. She also closed a certificate of deposit issued by a Virginia bank and deposited those funds into the new checking account. She reported a pre-conference balance of \$75,500.74. Required tax reports for the past ACI fiscal year have been filed with the Wyoming Secretary of State and the IRS. After the next fiscal year, a third filing will be required with New Hampshire.

Judy noted that she was unable to complete an independent audit but said she would have one done during conference "just for the record because it is important."

She reported that ACI has 43 agency/organization members, 1 sponsor, 1 associate member and 7 individual members.

She offered motions on two action items:

- 1) To accept individual membership request of Elyse J. Walter (Michigan). Randy Zellers second. Passed.
- 2) To add second signer to the ACI checking account based on upcoming elections. Tom Cadden second. Passed.

Investment Committee report: Micah Holmes reported on the committee's consideration of how best to use \$60,000 that was cashed out of a previous certificate of deposit investment. The committee's recommendation is to put \$7,500 into a "rainy day" fund and invest the remainder in a recruitment plan to boost conference attendance. That plan would be to spend \$15,000 on some form of stipends or registration fee waivers for attendees at the 2015 Arizona conference. This is in addition to the 11 Geoffrey Schneider Travel Scholarships customarily offered by ACI. The recruitment plan will be evaluated and adjusted as appropriate for the 2016 conference in Missouri.

Discussion followed (Michael Gray, Judy Stokes Webber, Tom Cadden, Kim Nix, Randy Zellers, Don King, Micah Holmes, Kay Ellerhoff, Scott Ball, Rachel Bradley, Marianne Bourke, Kathy Garza-Behr) on how to implement the proposal; whether a travel stipend or fee waiver would be more useful; who would handle the financial end (host state or someone else?); possible ethics concerns for some states; difficulty of out-of-state travel approval even when there is no cost involved; whether or not there would be non-profit implications by issuing travel stipends to individuals rather than agencies; whether it should be for first-time ACI attendees; whether it should be for one year (Arizona) or two years (Arizona and Missouri).

Micah suggested additional discussion with the intent of formulating a more specific plan to be offered at the ACI general business meeting.

Judy noted the alternate 2015 budget that includes the proposed inducement for Arizona.

Micah asked for volunteers to continue the discussion; Tom Cadden, Randy Zellers, Rachel Bradley and Don King agreed to participate.

Randy Zellers asked about an operating expenses entry in both the 2015 and 2015 alternate proposed ACI budgets. The entry shows a \$3,800 deposit for Arizona and a \$5,000 conference advance. Tom Cadden responded that the \$3,800 was a deposit to secure the conference center. The \$5,000 is the customary advance for deposit on buses, incidental expenses, etc., but he does not anticipate needing the full amount.

Appoint Auditing Committee: Don King appointed Garza-Behr and Marianne Burke to the committee.

Appoint Nominating Committee: Don King requested volunteers to serve on the nominating committee to select a new secretary and three new board members. Ball, Bradley and Garza-Behr agreed to serve.

Committee Reports

- a. **Auction Committee:** Randy Zellers reported that the annual auction was rounding into shape with at least four donated trips, donated items and plans to use raffle ticket revenue to purchase items at the Cabela's store in Omaha. Discussion followed regarding the purpose of the auction – to raise funds for ACI or to have a good time. Brief discussion followed. Michael Gray offered to put together a cookout at the Arizona conference to reduce costs and increase profits from the auction.
- b. **Awards Committee:** Kim Nix reported that there were 339 entries in the ACI Awards Contest, 30 more than last year and the most since record keeping began in 1993. Florida, Missouri, and Nebraska each had about 30 entries, and some other states had multiple entries. Nix reported there is potential for more entries since some states that traditionally enter did not this year. She sent a letter to states with a long history of ACI membership but don't enter the contest. She got some interest back. Entry fees totaled \$10,170 with plaques costing just over \$1,500. Graphics drew the most entries, followed by magazine general and photography. Two categories had only three entries, which according to contest rules resulted in only first place awarded in those categories. Award recipients will be posted on the ACI website, along with bios for the judges. Nix also announced she is stepping down as ACI Contest chair and that Julie Hammonds (Arizona) will take over. They will co-chair the contest next year.
- c. **Travel Scholarship (Don King on behalf of Robin Cahoon):** ACI received 11 applications for the Geoffrey Schneider Travel Scholarship in 2014. Ten scholarship were available for the 2014 conference (based on the \$5,200 budgeted by the ACI Board). Only nine of the 11 applications qualified for consideration, because multiple applications were received from Wyoming and South Carolina. The scholarships were allocated on a first-come, first-served basis. Only nine scholarships were awarded. Each scholarship covered the registration fee and four nights lodging at the conference hotel. Due to a withdrawal (Judith Hosafros), the second applicant (Jaimel Blajszczak) from Wyoming received the award. The original recipient from Utah (Dean Mitchell) was unable to attend and transferred his scholarship to

another employee (Michael Christensen) in the same agency. The original recipient from South Carolina (Patty Epley) was unable to attend and transferred her scholarship to another employee (Amanda Stroud) in the same agency. The ACI treasure sent the host state \$4,880.70 to cover the costs associated with this year's travel scholarship (1/2 the registration fee and four nights lodging per person).

Scholarship recipients will be required to take notes for at least one conference session and complete one article in the next year for The Balance Wheel.

Travel scholarship recipients for the 2014 conference represent nine member agencies/organizations: Florida, Georgia, Indiana, Kentucky, South Carolina, Texas, Utah and Wyoming. Only persons employed by member agencies/organizations or persons employed by potential member agencies/organizations are eligible to receive a Geoffrey Schneider Travel Scholarship (Article 7(a) of the ACI Bylaws).

Scholarship Recipients: Jaimel Blajszczak – WY; Phil Bloom – IN; Rachel Bradley – TX; Mike Christensen – UT; Amanda Stroud – SC; Michael Gray – KY; Jenifer Hancock – GA; Amanda Nalley - FL

- d. Balance Wheel:** Randy Zellers reported 454 subscribers to the ACI newsletter. He noted prior discussion of whether or not to keep subscribers whose agencies dropped their ACI membership. He sees no sense in dropping them since it is not an exclusive product and because the newsletter might serve as a reminder to pay delinquent dues. He said the newsletter has about a 30 percent open rate and 14 percent click-thru rate, which directs traffic to the ACI website. The Balance Wheel had been quarterly, was tried monthly, but content was insufficient to maintain a monthly schedule. It is now on a bimonthly cycle. He will meet with ACI Travel Scholarship recipients to take notes at conference sessions and write articles for the Balance Wheel.
- e. Ways & Means:** No report.
- f. Webmaster:** Phil Bloom reported on behalf of Jeff Eschler reported by email that Jeff is working on a version of the website for mobile devices and tablets. He also is working to build a conference website template with includes standard navigation and online payment procedures to help with future conferences.
- g. Future Conference Sites:** Kay Ellerhoff reported she has four viable candidates for the 2017 conference, that New Hampshire is tentative for 2018, and that Nevada, New Jersey, New Mexico and Oklahoma have expressed interest in future years.

Regina Knauer provided an update on the 2016 Missouri conference, with Springfield the likely location. She mentioned a new conference center, the WOLF (Wonders of the Ozarks Learning Facility) School, Wonders of Wildlife Museum, and Bass Pro Shops.

Tom Cadden provided an update on the 2015 Arizona conference, which will be July 13-17 and centered at the new High Country Conference Center in Flagstaff. Lodging will be at the Drury Inn/Suites with room rates are expected to be in the low to mid \$80 range. He envisions having conference sessions at High Country on Tuesday and Thursday with a Wednesday bus trip to Grand Canyon National Park for morning and afternoon sessions. Tom made a formal invitation. Micah Holmes moved to accept. Scott Ball second. Passed.

Best Practices and Deadlines for Future Conferences: Micah Holmes reported discussions between he and Robin Cahoon that ACI might be missing the opportunity to increase conference attendance. His suggestion is to develop deadlines/guidelines for publishing the agenda, securing the hotel/lodging, outreach to sponsors, and the announcement of auction items. He said the intent is to help host states stay on track to ensure the best opportunity for outreach. He said the board would discuss and perhaps approve a policy during its next conference call meeting. Discussion followed.

Liaison Reports:

- a. **West:** Judith Hosafros reported there would be two Wyoming conference attendees this year. She noted that she is retiring and will relinquish her liaison responsibilities.
- b. **OWAA:** Phil Bloom reported that OWAA's 2014 conference was in McAllen, Texas, where attendance was low (150-200) despite a strong agenda. He noted newly elected officers (Mark Freeman, president; Lisa Densmore Ballard, 1st vice president; Brett Prettyman, 2nd vice president; Ty Stockton, treasurer) and newly elected board members (Phil Bloom, Sam Caldwell and Kris Milgate). He noted that Brent Frazee (Excellence in Craft), Kris Thoemke (Jade of Chiefs) and Spence Turner (J. Hammond Brown) were major award recipients. Membership is up slightly over 2013. Future conference locations and dates are Knoxville, Tenn. (June 26-28, 2015) and Billings, Mont. (July 16-18, 2016)

Other Business: Micah brought up reviving the ACE Award, which was approved in 2002 to be awarded at AFWA conferences to recognize professional accomplishments of conservation communicators. Discussion followed. No action taken.

Marianne Bourke noted that liaison positions are vacant for the Southeast and Midwest and that the West position will become vacant.

Rachel Bradley asked if ACI has ever had a public relations/marketing committee. Judy Stokes Webber noted that the membership committee has fulfilled that role in the past. Rachel suggested improving communications to promote conference and awards. Brief discussion followed. No action taken.

Motion to adjourn (Scott Ball). Second (Regina Knauer). Passed.