

MINUTES

Association for Conservation Information Board Meeting
Virtual Conference Call • March 11, 2026 • 11 a.m.-12 p.m. CDT

ITEM NO. 1: Meeting Called to Order

ITEM NO. 2: Roll Call

- ✓ Aaron Meier (NV, President)
- ✓ Linda DiPiano (NJ, Vice President)
- ✓ Lance Cherry (CAHSS, Secretary)
- ✓ Dan Dennison (HI, Treasurer)
- ✓ Blake Podhajsky (OK, Immediate Past President)
- ✓ Brent Drinkut (IN, Board- 26)
- ✓ Bobby Jones (NV, Board- 26)
- ☐ Beth Quillian (OR, Board-26)
- ☐ Jonathan Carlucci (NJ, Board- 27)
- ✓ Jane Gustafson (NE, Board- 27)
- ✓ Mischelle Diaz (OK, Board- 27)
- ☐ Devon Lindley (Choctaw Nation Wildlife Conservation-28)
- ☐ Natalie Andes (GA Department of Natural Resources-28)
- ✓ Katie Paey (NJ Division of Fish and Wildlife-28)
- ☐ Jenifer Wisniewski (National Deer Association, Grants Committee Chair)
- ☐ Jason Harmon (TN, Fundraising/Auction Committee Chair)
- ☐ Micah Holmes (OK, Ways and Means Committee Chair)
- ✓ Patty Allen (AFWA, Communications Committee Chair)

ITEM NO. 3: Approval of Minutes

- January 14, 2026 Board Meeting minutes

Jane Gustafson made a Motion to approve the Minutes from the January 14, 2026 Board Meeting to be approved without changes. Brent Drinkut seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

ITEM NO. 4: Opening Remarks

Presented by Aaron Meier, President

Dan Dennison made a Motion to approve Mischelle Diaz of Texas to fill the vacant board position. Jane Gustafson seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

ITEM NO. 5: Treasurer's Report

Presented by Dan Dennison, Treasurer

- Treasurer's Report

Dan opened the meeting by sharing the current account balances. The ACI account balance is \$82,156, and the conference account balance is \$20,142.



Dan noted that three agencies, New Mexico, New York, and South Carolina, still owe awards entry fees from last year and are now past due. He plans to send reminder emails to each organization explaining that they will be ineligible to submit award entries until their accounts are brought current. This restriction will apply only to award entries and will not affect conference attendance.

ITEM NO. 6: 2026 ACI Conference Update

Presented by Blake Podhajsky, 2026 Conference Coordinator

Blake provided a conference update and highlighted several areas of progress. Registration is now officially open following the completion of the soft launch. The conference agenda has been posted and is approximately 90 to 95 percent finalized. Patty offered to assist with the announcement. Blake also noted that all facilities are now under contract, and the welcome reception will be held off-site.

Blake shared that sponsorships have been challenging this year and remain significantly below target. If sponsorship revenue does not improve, the committee may need to remove one lunch from the budget. Board members were asked to provide any potential sponsorship leads.

The committee is also working on three discounted excursions for attendees. Discussion followed about how those options could be managed through Whova.

Auction items for the conference are beginning to come together. Items will be posted on the website to help promote the auction before the conference.

For outreach, ODWC sent 150 emails to non-traditional entities and Oklahoma media. The agency director also sent an invitation to all state agency directors.

For the 2027 conference, North Carolina has expressed some concerns and will meet with Blake today to discuss next steps.

ITEM NO. 7: Communications Report

Presented by Patty Allen, Communications Chair

The button tool has been installed on the website for \$25, providing a simple enhancement that should improve management and usability moving forward.

The next issue of the Balance Wheel is scheduled to go out in April or May, with May 7 identified as a possible date. The newsletter continues to perform well, with the most recent issue earning a 44 percent open rate, well above the industry average of 15 to 25 percent. Board members were encouraged to verify that they are subscribed to the Balance Wheel to ensure they receive future updates.

Upcoming communications will include special messaging related to registration, scholarships, and awards. Patty is preparing the registration announcement email, which will also include scholarship information.

A new podcast episode was published last week and has been promoted through social media.

ITEM NO. 8: Awards Committee Report

Presented by Beth Quillian, Awards Committee Co-Chair

No report presented.

ITEM NO. 9: Auction and Fundraising Report



Presented by Jason Harmon, Auction and Fundraising Committee Chair

No report presented.

ITEM NO. 10: Scholarships Committee Report

Presented by Bobby Jones

The scholarship application has been built in SurveyMonkey and is now available on the updated scholarship webpage. The page includes the application link and notes that the deadline to apply is May 11.

Bobby Jones, who is serving as the new scholarship coordinator, created the application form with assistance from Oklahoma. The program seeks to offer up to 10 scholarships, with preference given to ACI members and first-time attendees.

A cost analysis showed that awarding 10 scholarships would total \$13,190. This estimate includes four hotel nights at \$211 per night, plus the \$475 early bird registration fee. The total would exceed the current \$10,000 scholarship budget by \$3,190. Exceeding the budget requires board approval.

Bobby Jones made a Motion to approve up to 10 scholarships to be awarded for this year's conference. Linda DiPiano seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

ITEM NO. 11: Grants Committee Report

Presented by Jenifer Wisniewski, Grants Committee Chair

No report presented.

ITEM NO. 12: Ways and Means Report

Presented by Micah Holmes, Ways and Means Committee Chair

No report presented.

ITEM NO. 13: New Business

Presented by Aaron Meier, President

The National Field Archery Association was presented to the Board for membership.

Lance Cherry made a Motion to approve the National Field Archery Association for membership in ACI. Jane Gustafson seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

ITEM NO. 14: Adjournment

Jane Gustafson made a Motion to adjourn the meeting. Linda Dipiano seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

Submitted by Lance Cherry, Secretary