

SAS Board Minutes
Oct. 24, 2017
338 Hawthorne Ave. NE

Present: Ray Temple, Tim Johnson, Michael Babbitt, Carolyn Homan, Judy Brunkal, Lowell Spring, Maureen Leong-Kee, Laurie Buswell, administrator **Guests:** Damien Lewis, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service; Mike Unger **Absent:** Doug Spencer

Call to Order: Ray called the meeting to order at 6:05 p.m.

Guest presentations

Mike Unger – Ray introduced Mike, Salem Audubon member who developed and teaches bird identification classes for SAS, to report on workshop participation so far and plans for the future. First, he reported that the SAS Facebook page, which he monitors, is up to 527 “likes” and activity, although down a bit, still shows 300 to 400 visits a week.

He shared a handout showing statistics for the 10 workshops held since the first one in March 2016. Raptor ID has been the most popular. He plans some new topics as well. Total attendance is 292 with an almost even split between SAS members and non-members. One goal of the workshops was to reach those outside SAS. Total proceeds are \$356.95. All fees go to SAS. Attendance and proceeds have exceeded expectations.

Workshop topics for 2018 include Molt and Migration; Hummingbirds; Waterbirds; and Raptors. Class participants voted on suggested topics to offer. He also said that feedback via class evaluation surveys have come back 75% “excellent.” He has now been asked by other groups to offer classes, including the Fuchsia Society and Crossler Middle School.

He also noted that the Christmas Bird Count training is coming up Nov. 3. Board members congratulated Mike on the success of the classes and thanked him for his efforts on behalf of SAS.

Damien Miller, Nature Center agreements and next steps – Ray introduced Damien, project leader for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Willamette Valley Refuge complex, and introductions were made around the room. He shared some of his background working with USFWS and explained his role in Phase I of the Nature Center as project leader for the Refuge Complex. He said once Nature Center agreements are signed by SAS and the Regional USFWS Office, he has authority to proceed with decisions and plans. That authority stays with him unless an issue arises for which no agreement can be reached. He will defer to the Regional USFWS Office in Portland for guidance in those cases. Once the Nature Center is built, decisions about maintenance, parking, building use, etc., will continue to fall to him to work out.

He said there are pros and cons of working with USFWS. On the pro side, he pointed out that the Service has committed \$1.4 million to the project already. And the agency budgets for the long term. Deferred maintenance priorities, for instance, are set on a 5-year plan. As the Nature Center proceeds, if issues arise it is always possible the Service can find a source of some funding to handle the issue or a part of it.

On the con side, there's always the possibility of a government shut-down, which would include the Nature Center, since it is on federal refuge property. Another of the cons is that the USFWS is a huge bureaucracy and delays can occur.

Damien said he tries to keep decisions from going to regional because the bureaucratic process can proceed slowly. The Nature Center Memo of Understanding, for instance, hit a big snag at Regional. A newly hired Solicitor had a background in working with third party vendors and his experience was to reduce the risk to the government. Looking at the MOU through that lens has led to new delays as paperwork was revised to satisfy the solicitor but yet not make it too onerous for SAS. He said he thinks the documents are nearing approval by the solicitor but insurance coverage is a continuing uncertainty.

Decisions needed

Insurance issues – There are questions about how much general liability SAS needs. Certainly there will be liability requirements for the design/build contractor, Damien said. SAS has coverage but there is a question of whether we need to put USFWS on the policy. SAS needs to have a detailed conversation with its agent about what it will take to satisfy the MOU conditions. **Action item: Ray asked Tim to follow up with the SAS agent.**

Damien said he needs a basic “I can cover this for xx dollars,” kind of statement. If that is less than what the solicitor wants, Damien can go to Regional with information on what SAS has and what the eventual contractor will provide and see if he can get signatures on the MOU.

The Board discussed approving a commitment to coverage up to a certain cost – perhaps \$10,000 to meet the insurance requirement for no more than a year to cover the construction period. Michael moved that the Board approve spending up to \$10,000 on the needed coverage. Tim seconded. The motion carried.

Funding a “complete design” – The Board discussed a proposal to fund the “complete design” of Gehlar Hall, not just Phase I. Ray asked Tim for an accounting of SAS funding available for the Nature Center project, not including investment accounts needed for long-term operation of the Nature Center and SAS in general. Tim said there was \$751,030 in CDs as of Sept. 30 plus \$16,885 in a bank account.

There also was \$8,366 from Oregon Community Foundation proceeds for general operations and \$277,439 invested as a long-term operating fund stream. Of the latter, plans are to use only up to 4% a year – \$20,000 or so – in order to maintain a sustainable fund.

Ray said \$600,000 was previously allocated by the Board for design and construction of Phase I. The question: Should we invest addition money for a complete design?

Damien noted that funding the full design improves the design functionality, provides consistency between phases and efficiencies for elements such as heating systems that will serve the entire project. In addition, USFWS has a list of “shovel ready” projects that includes the Nature Center. Having the full design done improves the chances of starting another phase should federal funds become available. Carolyn agreed with these points and added that having a full design shows a vision for the entire project that would be a plus in approaching foundations and other donors. It also shows a prudent use of funds to avoid redoing elements such as heating or wiring or having to rework interior walls, etc., to accommodate needs of a future phase.

SAS has \$30,000 from USFWS for the full design, Ray said, leaving \$61,000 to cover. He proposed funding that and amending the MOU documents to reflect funding of the full design. The total Nature Center bill, including insurance, full design and the 10% contingency figured on the new costs, would be \$737,000. That would leave \$31,095 in SAS Nature Center funds as a buffer. Ray said he believes this is an opportunity to affect the quality of the building.

Michael moved that the Board authorize future spending of \$600,000 for design/construction of Phase I, an additional \$61,000 for design of the entire Nature Center and \$66,000 additional for contingencies. Tim seconded. The motion carried.

Damien said they would move forward with modifying the MOU documents to reflect these decisions. He thanked SAS for moving ahead and partnering with USFWS in connecting people with nature. The Board thanked Damien for his work and also thanked Graham Evans-Peters for his efforts on behalf of the project as well.

PREVIOUS MONTH'S MINUTES – Carolyn

Carolyn asked for any corrections and a motion to approve. There was a question about where Green award nominations would be accepted from. It was agreed it should be the SAS service area – Marion and Polk counties. Also, the firm name is Heritage Seedlings (not Seeds). Tim moved to approve the minutes as corrected. Judy seconded. Motion carried. As a followup, Ray advised Judy and the awards committee to delay work until he hears from Straub because the nature of the awards program appears to be in flux.

Review of Action Items –

- 1) **Tim to revise a proposed personnel policy change re: vacation hour payout and rollover and bring it back for Board action.** Tim shared the three main elements, including payout language and a chart showing the accrual rate and maximum accruals. He also modified the language in the definition of “maximum accrual,” listing it as the difference between total accrued (earned) vacation hours and any used vacation hours. In addition, any unused accrued vacation time will be paid at the end of employment. Carryover is allowed, but the employee can only accumulate a certain amount (the maximum accrual.)

Tim moved to replace the section in the policy manual regarding vacation with the revised language. Judy seconded. Motion carried.

Treasurer's Report – Tim

He shared copies of his financial summary email. The report reflects the end of the fiscal year. In general, SAS made its budget and did very well on investments for the year.

Regarding individual accounts, the restricted CLEAR grant account for meetings is at \$560. Laurie said the church is paid for use of the Carrier Room through November. Ray cautioned that he needs some lead time in order to prepare another CLEAR grant request to cover meeting space.

Tim said SAS made \$40,812 on the investment fund to support the Nature Center. One expense was the three-panel display Doug arranged, which was used at the Doug Marshall celebration at Ankeny.

The final appeal letter of the calendar year will be mailed in mid-November. Before that drops, he asked Board members to make "thank you" calls to major donors. **Action item: He will put lists together and email the information to Board.**

Tim's list of next steps includes developing the 2017-18 budget; beginning preparation of the 2016-17 tax return; and beginning preparation of the financial portion of the annual report to National Audubon Society. Ray asked what other information needs to be developed for that report because requested numbers (of classes, etc.) can be an issue.

DISCUSSION TOPICS

Wren box program – Lowell talked to Chet Zenone at the wood shop. Materials per box cost \$3 (wood and hardware). About 10 years ago, the shop was producing about 1,200 boxes a year. In the last 2 years, it's been about 600 a year and this year was about 500 boxes. He said he's encouraging schools to schedule nest box programs earlier so the boxes are up for nesting season.

Ray has suggested that it makes sense to move to production of swallow boxes because these birds are less secretive than wrens and provide a better learning experience. Lowell said it was a good suggestion but the shop has to figure out how kits can be produced so kids can nail them together.

Judy said chickadee boxes are accepted by more species. Ray said the intent is a box swallows can use and if a chickadee box works, that's fine.

Action item: Lowell will talk with Chet again, in advance of setting up a meeting to make possible changes in nest box production.

Board member recruitment – Ray said we need to refocus on board member recruitment. He has a potential candidate.

Upcoming fundraising meeting at Audubon Portland – Ray said he, Tim and Carolyn would be traveling to Audubon PDX Nov. 16. Carolyn said they will be meeting with the Executive Director, Development Director and others to focus on potential ways Salem and Portland could cooperate on fundraising for the Nature Center. The potential for collaboration arose at the Ankeny celebration for Dave Marshall, who was a long-time member of Portland Audubon. Portland isn't open to any cooperative activities for at least a year, due to a current fundraising campaign of their own, but that fits with the SAS timeline anyway. Discussions will include what kind of cooperation might be possible; coverage of any costs involved; possibility of donor introductions, etc.

Chapter meeting speaker coordinator – Ray noted that as of May 2018, Stephanie will be stepping down as coordinator of speakers for Chapter meetings. Ray will announce it at the next Chapter meeting but if no one steps up, there potentially will be no Chapter meetings other than the annual May meeting for election of Board members. That meeting also could potentially be used as a volunteer appreciation event.

Next meeting – 6 p.m. Nov. 28 at 338 Hawthorne.

Adjournment – 8:20 p.m.