

SAS Board Minutes

Dec. 22, 2020

Via Zoom call

Participating: Tim Johnson, Michael Babbitt, Maureen Leong-Kee, Carolyn Homan, Cynthia Donald, Judy Brunkal, Lowell Spring (via phone), Michael Williams, Doug Spencer, Laurie Buswell, administrator, and

Guest: Mike Unger

Absent: Jenny Ammon

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

Webinar report for 2020, Mike Unger – Mike shared his latest report on the 16 Audubon webinars presented in 2020, beginning in July. Of 266 people registering, 77% attended and 70% of those signing up were SAS members. Average participating per seminar was 15.6. For future seminars, the average for signups is 16. Best attendance for 2020 webinars was for Christmas Bird Count Tips/Tricks (96%) and Raptor ID (94%).

Financially, things look good. Expenses for 2020 webinars were \$480 and income was \$700 from the 5 paid webinars. There are 5 paid webinars coming up in January and February. Also he is planning new nature classes with topics such as butterflies and dragonflies, which will probably start in May or so. Maureen said she has photos to share for use and Mike welcomed those.

He said interest continues to grow for the Facebook page with 937 people “following” the page. The YouTube channel has 10 videos posted, with 149 views, 9 likes and no dislikes, and 9 subscribers. The past month had fewer views (down 46%) but more viewing hours (up7%). No idea why that would be.

Maureen said the Beginning Bird class could fit into the upcoming schedule of webinars in April probably, but she will coordinate with Mike’s schedule.

Minutes from November, Carolyn – She said Jenny had noted a correction under Field Trip Committee, second sentence: “Even though (not the) pod trips...” Mike Williams moved minutes be approved as correction and Michael Babbitt seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

Committee Reports

Birder’s Night – January’s webinar will be the annual Photo Sharing with 4 presenters. Information will be in the Kestrel. Tim said there was a problem with the Kestrel this time because Willamette’s print shop shut down in mid-December. He said he and Laurie will be printing out the 69 copies that are mailed and handle it themselves.

Christmas Bird Count – Tim said the weather was pretty good with just light rain in some sectors. He said 103 species were reported and that may jump to 105 in the final count. Sectors had pretty good coverage despite reduced team sizes. Data is still coming in. Mike Unger will enter it. Judy asked if there had been unusual sightings. Tim said he hadn’t reviewed the data but anecdotally a huge number of pine siskins was a standout. There also were quite a few common golden eyes and owls.

Nature Center Update

Website – Mike Williams reported on his work to get the website up and perfected. He said it’s nearly complete, with everything converted to SquareSpace and translated into Spanish. He shared screen shots so the Board could see the design. He said it’s at the point where more eyes are needed to review the content and asked the Board for help reacting as users. **Action item: He will email instructions on how to view it. The password is “Dusky.”** He would like feedback on usability, ease of getting from place to place, any problems encountered, needed edits re: content accuracy, etc. Once the Nature Center opens, the photos can be updated but he welcomed better photo options if people have them. Cynthia said she has a video of geese to share.

He said he's looking for it to go online in January but since the website will be a platform for promotion, he doesn't want to launch too soon before the Center is open enough for people to visit.

The Board thanked Mike for tremendous work to get the site up and running. It will be a wonderful tool to attract people to the Center. Tim asked for help updating the SAS website as well. Mike mentioned better linkage between SAS, the Nature Center and the Friends' sites as a goal because it would increase traffic for all the groups. Another goal is getting SAS's site translated into Spanish.

Tim said Pat Gallagher wants to investigate the Nature Center as a site for blue bird boxes. He did a proposal for Graham and several are now installed on the property.

Tim also said litter problems at Ankeny in general, not so much the Center, are a big problem. He said there will be an article in the Kestrel seeking volunteers for a litter patrol. Doug said this has been a problem for many years. People just dump their trash and the experience is that if you let it happen it gets worse, he said.

Lowell also brought up the huge potholes at the entrances to some of the pullouts, particularly Eagle and Pintail Marshes and Rail Trail. Doug recommended a letter from the Board to Damien asking for the potholes/puddle areas to be filled. ***Action item: Doug to draft a letter and send to Tim to forward on.**

Doug added that one issue is that there is no local Refuge law enforcement now. The Coast district handles it for the Willamette Refuge complex. Tim said the Nature Center still needs security gates before it can open to the public and those are now delayed until probably February. The Center itself needs security cameras. He said the Center also needs to look "finished" before it can open and there are other delays in artwork for kiosk signs and trails. These also items are delayed until the end of February. Bottom line: Opening probably won't be until March.

DMT Call recap – Tim said Samantha is working on resources for the classroom. She has about \$12,000 from the Willamette Habitat group and \$5,000 in her Refuge budget for shelves, AV kits, etc. We'll also need chairs and other items. He said they may come to SAS for help but we have funds independent of money dedicated to the Marshall classroom. There is about \$46,000 left over from Phase I development and that could be used to equipment the classroom and buy other items to get the Center open. Another \$3,600 was used to cover concrete work for the kiosk and to connect the play area to Gehlar Hall.

Tim said he will research WiFi, etc., for the Center. The Refuge may pay for this because they may want control, since it's a federal facility. He's also looking at a professional monitoring service through Ring for Center security.

Graham is working on the partner design/construction agreement for the Dave Marshall classroom. The Facility Use agreement also is due. Re: the Nature Explore area, he said there's a meeting Jan. 6 about that bid, which is coming along. Re: the water system, Tim said we're just waiting on final OK from Oregon Health Authority. Quarterly tests will be conducted to make sure water quality is maintained.

Update to Strategic Plan re: Nature Center – Tim said he revisited the plan after Carolyn raised the issue last meeting. 2015 was the last update and the groups were still in the partnership phase. Some updates to goals are needed. The educational programs and efforts to market the Center to others for their use in compatible education programs (free of charge to them) are goal targets. Mike Williams now also has ideas for curriculum design and workshops to help teachers and Lowell has other ideas to expand educational efforts.

Lowell said he would like to work with a snake expert from Western Oregon University on a program and a Mammals of the Meadows program is another idea. He said schools such as Oregon Heritage School on the groups of the old Fairview site, Abiqua School off South Liberty, Queen of Peace, Salem YMCA and Crosshill Christian all are possible customers.

Tim said we could market specific programs to specific groups. Mike W. added that the Center is a perfect hub for a variety of educational deliveries. Tim suggested the possibility of having a naturalist available at peak

times for unstructured learning opportunities. We will be able to hang up bird feeders so that could be a learning site as well. He said we will need to make a decision on what to put forward first and how to market it. He said Jenny has said it will be difficult to market to Salem-Keizer schools because environmental education has not been a priority.

Adding a goal around “work parties,” such as a litter patrol, also would be a good activity to add to the plan.

Financial Report, Tim – He had emailed the financial spreadsheet. He said SAS is 25% behind on proceeds from appeal letters for the year but all results are not in from the year-end appeal and several checks have come in.

He sent data to the bookkeeper for the tax filing. The Board will have to review and OK the return. ***Action item: He will email the form. The deadline for submission is Feb. 15.**

Other items

Trespassing on SAS property at Minto – Tim said the city’s ranger reported the trespassing and Tim filed an authorization with the City so they can follow up but they have to have an address and there is no “address” for the property. It appears to be a dead issue at this point.

Staff Policy Manual changes – Tim said we have omitted some federal holidays from our paid leave list: President’s Day, Veteran’s Day, Columbus Day (now Indigenous Peoples Day) and ???
He made a motion to bring the staff schedule in line with the federal schedule and add Christmas Eve and New Year’s Eve. Mike Babbitt seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

Tim also proposed eliminating the limit of 150 hours of accumulated sick leave. He said we don’t pay this when a person leaves employment and in a major illness, 150 hours isn’t many. Tim moved that the Board eliminate the 150-hour limit for accumulated sick leave. Judy seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

Marion Soil and Water update – Laurie said the MSWCD manager had been dismissed and the organization will hire a new leader. The word is that SAS is still welcome to share the new office space in Stayton whenever the move takes place but the new manager will have a say in that whenever he/she is hired.

Bird burial? – Judy asked about the planned burial of excess bird specimens. Michael B. said he had decided that December wasn’t good timing given the soggy weather and was looking at January. ***Action item: Michael will contact Lee Slatum to set this up.**

Membership update – As part of the annual report to National Audubon, Tim said we provide a membership update. The chapter now has 314 paid members, a pretty big increase. He said some come from the webinars but a lot of people visit the Support Us page on the website too.

Adjourn: Meeting adjourned at 8 p.m.

Next Board meeting: 6 p.m. Jan. 26 via Zoom