

GrassWorks Board Meeting
March 10, 2016
Schmeekle Reserve

Board Members Present: Wally Sedlar, Andy Jaworski, Larry Smith, Julie Engel, Dave Vetrano, Peter Arnold, Cheyenne Christianson, Dan Olson, Jason Cavadini, Jim Quick, Dave Heidel

Staff: Jill Hapner, Heather Flashinski

Advisers: Brian Pillsbury, Vance Haugen, Jerold Berg

Meeting was called to order at 10:08 am by Wally S.

Agenda and minutes review

Minutes from Jan 16, 2016 reviewed

Motion to approve: Julie/Jim – carried

Financial report

The financial report was reviewed by Jill. She started by discussing the current status of grants and gifts. There is \$1,691.67 coming to GrassWorks from the SARE grant. The 2016 conference balance is \$14,107.20. The current general fund balance is \$69,576.18, and the GrassWorks foundation balance is \$14,232.62. There was some discussion on what could be done to create more interest in donating to GrassWorks. The possibility of offering a microloan to farmers was discussed. It could provide a better return than 0.05% interest, and could create a better image for the foundation. Julie mentioned the concept of Third Party Endorsement, and said that she will follow up on that before next meeting.

Motion to approve financial report: Andy/Dan – carried

Update on NRCS assistance agreement

Call-in with Paul Daigle

Paul explained some of the difficulties with getting the program up and running, including issues with emails and following directions. It appears that many of those issues are being taken care of. Another issue has been that of planners substituting farmers on their own discretion, but it must be approved by NRCS. The first two plans are now complete. There will not be a problem fulfilling the goal for number of plans. The issue will actually be an excess of plans requested. Dan Olson mentioned that there could be an issue of poor recommendations being made, and that further training for planners may be necessary. The goal of GrassWorks is to complete 30 plans by October 1. This goal looks lofty at this point, and we may need to consider extending by a year, and at the very least need to put pressure on the planners to complete plans that are in the works. Wally raised a question regarding why the bylaws forbid him (as president) to write a plan. It may be more time effective for him to be able to since he is closer in proximity to some of the farms than other planners. Jill will be looking into the possibility of an extension. Brian Pillsbury closed discussion by stating how thankful NRCS is for GrassWorks providing this service to them.

Board resignation and election

Julie has resigned from her position on the board

Jason was elected to the board

Motion to elect Jason to board: Larry/Dave – passed

Jason was nominated for secretary

Motion to nominate Jason for secretary: Dave/Larry – passed

Executive Directors Report

SARE Grant – Jill described that the grant is intended to help GrassWorks work with RC&Ds to get out and work with local agencies on grazing and soil health so they are equipped to help farmers with grazing. She mentioned that despite a late start, GrassWorks is doing well with this and is caught up.

Proposed Grant – \$21,000 has been requested from the Blooming Prairie Foundation to help with website upgrades, conference speaker fees, and the Grazing Ambassadors. Jill is also looking into a Conservation Innovation Grant (CIG) through NRCS to use for supporting pasture walks. This grant is focused on soil health and environmentally sound farming practices. It was just announced and will be due in June. We need to check with DGA to make sure we are not competing for funding.

Upcoming events

- Farm Tech Days, Walworth County – booths are free, but as of right now nobody is committed to attending a booth
- Heart of WI Grazing Conference, Wausau – pasture sticks and manuals will be provided
- Mother Earth News Conference, Washington County – free passes for booth attendees
- GrassWorks picnic, Dave Heidel farm – no date set currently; would Organic Valley be interested in bringing chef again?; request dish to pass; Savanna group may be interested in partnering with event
- Dan Olson Family Farm Day – June 25; would like a GrassWorks display; over 1,000 attendees last year

Displays – A few of the displays are missing and/or out of order. We need to get everything back into order. Brian Pillsbury has been the display coordinator, but is passing duties onto Jill.

Grazing Ambassadors – Haven't talked much in 2016. Julie mentioned three tentative events. There needs to be more of a presence with more talks to non-farm groups.

Tax documents – Jill has identified all of the documents that we are required to file. Now we will likely start filing our own taxes.

Newsletters – The paper version in Graze costs \$400 annually. Julie has offered to continue putting it together, and the group agreed to continue this. Dan Olson recommended running a report on meadow fescue seed supplies.

Membership – GrassWorks is currently at 114 members. We discussed why more people aren't electing to become members when they sign up for the conference. It was mentioned that it could help to better denote members at the conference (instead of small stickers).

Grazing guides and sticks – 2016 Grazing Guide sales to-date = 1 (350 ordered in 2014; 2015 sales = 41); 2016 Pasture Stick sales to-date = 17 (500 ordered in 2015; 2015 sales = 102)

GrassWorks Staff – Jill was brought on staff in 2012 and was promised to not work more than 12 hours per week. The communication coordinator left right away when she started. Heather was brought on staff in 2014 as the sponsorship coordinator. In the meantime the GLCI funding was lost. Both of them end up volunteering a lot of time. Their contracts both have a base salary of \$14,500. Jill's bonuses are

based on grants, and Heather's are based on income. They stated that they are fine with their contracts for the time being.

2016 Conference Recap – Heather noted that Ray Archuleta stood out in the evaluations, receiving very high grades. The speaker bios may be getting too long for the programs. The registration table was not in the best place because the line often got backed up. Next year we could use more easels and more signage. There was a great deal of discussion regarding the live auction, and how it could be adjusted to get more attendance. The general consensus was that holding the auction near the tail end of dinner but before the speaker may be the best option. The cash bar costs \$350 per bartender, and we need to meet the minimum of beer served. This year we did not meet the minimum.

2017 Conference – Next year will be the 25th conference. We discussed how we can capitalize on that. Names mentioned for possible speakers: Ray Archuleta, Debora Pearson, Allen Williams, Alan Nation. At the next meeting we will discuss potential Grazing Advocate Award recipients, but the idea of honoring someone who's been involved for the past 25 years was mentioned. We are required to have at least one presentation on soil health because of the grant. Heather discussed the 2017 conference budget, and mentioned that the date has been changed to Feb 2-4 due to scheduling conflicts for Chula Vista.

On Pasture – a weekly online newsletter, has asked if GrassWorks would partner with them. They have an estimated 2,000 readers in Wisconsin. They are asking for \$250 for sponsorship. The consensus was that this is probably worth the cost for GrassWorks.

Motion to approve Executive Report and 2017 conference budget: Dan/Dave – approved

Meadow Fescue Report – Larry explained that the lot of bad Hidden Valley seed is currently being cleaned by Deer Creek Seed. There should be around 600-700 lbs after cleaning. It is a public variety, and Mike Casler is working with the seed and will work through Foundation Seeds. He will likely keep around 50 lbs, and Larry will keep 100 lbs. Dan Olson needs around 400 lbs.

NSAC Update – Cheyenne has been out of the loop and has nothing to report since last meeting.

NRCS Technical Committee – Wally explained that they had some discussion about grazing at the last nutrient management meeting

Ag Coalition Update – Larry attended the last meeting, and there was no meeting last month. The dominant topic was the UW Extension reorganization. The topic will come up again at the next meeting. The large commodity groups have the biggest voice, and as a result the smaller groups such as beef are feeling left out. The large groups such as potatoes and dairy don't want county agents, but rather specialists.

USA Today Advertisement – Wally was contacted about GrassWorks advertising in a special agricultural issue. The consensus was that the cost was too expensive.

Other business – Heather asked if anyone else wants to serve on the conference committee. Brian Pillsbury and Peter Arnold agreed to join. Jill contacted Dan Small of Outdoor Wisconsin about featuring GrassWorks.

Motion to adjourn at 2:25 pm: Dan/Cheyenne - carried