

GrassWorks, Inc.
Board of Directors Meeting
Agenda for meeting of
Tuesday, March 17, 2015
10:00 am - 2:00 pm
Schmeckle Reserve, Steven's Point, WI

Board members present: Dave Vetrano, Larry Smith, Laura Paine, Kevin Mahalko, Julie Engel, Wally Sedler, Matt Hartwig, Peter Arnold, Andy Jaworski, Dave Heidel.

Missing: Cheyenne Christianson (excused absence)

Advisors: Brian Pillsbury, NRCS; Paul Daigle, Land Conservation; Theresa Feiner, DATCP; Vance Haugen, UW Extension; Jerold Berg, Emeritus board member

GrassWorks Staff: Jill Hapner

1. Call GrassWorks Board of Directors to order – Kevin Mahalko

Meeting called to order at 10:10 am

Welcome new board members. Introductions all around.

2. Review and approve minutes from January 17, 2015 meeting – Laura Paine

Laura reviewed minutes from the 1/17 board meeting.

Motion to approve the minutes: Julie/Larry. Motion carried.

Board minutes from the January 15th board meeting are being retrieved from previous secretary, Wendy Galbraith and will be reviewed and approved at the next meeting.

3. Membership & Treasurer's reports – Julie Engel and Jill Hapner

Jill gave a report on grant funds and a brief summary of the conference finances. Jill distributed a financial report of grant and conference funds.

Question on membership.

Current memberships is at 83. Jill thinks we should have a goal of at least 100 members.

Motion to approve program and grant financial report: Dave Vetrano/Dave Heidel. Motion carried.

4. Executive Director's report – Jill Hapner

Grants reviewed:

- NSAC Strategic Initiative grants (SIG).
 - Grant #1: working with MFAI (Margaret Krome and George Reistad) on evaluating the CSP program.
 - Grant #2: funding to support underserved farmers to attend the Conference.
- Organic Valley CROPP funds: Support for grazing ambassador program (paying stipends).
- Organic Valley FCGC grant: publicity funding, re-designing and creation of display materials, funding for educational displays at conferences and workshops.

Grazing Sticks

Jill is looking for co-sponsors to support the purchase of 1000 grazing sticks. It will cost \$5000 to make them. There is space for one or two logos, so she is looking for either \$2500 or \$5000 from sponsors. The group generated names of organizations and companies that might be interested in sponsoring, including UW Extension, Trout Unlimited, Prairie Creek Seeds, Byron Seeds, Cutler Fence, etc.

Jill listed several grant and foundation funding programs that may be good opportunities for GrassWorks. Laura suggested Farm Aid. She will send info to Jill. Some other sources of funding Jill listed include UNFI foundation and Cliff Bar foundation. Theresa Feiner from DATCP is familiar with some of these funding sources and offered to help with approaching them.

Website update: Jill would like to get some bids to update and streamline the GrassWorks website. Once she has the bids, she will look for funding to cover the costs. Once she has the funding in hand, she will ask for a board committee to help with the redesign.

Norski Farm Days (June 20th in Lena). Dan Olsen asked GrassWorks to help lead the pasture walks for this event. Matt and Andy have volunteered to help. Dave Heidel is attending and will bring the GrassWorks display. Julie shared that Dan has a Kickstarter campaign going to raise \$1000 to cover the cost of a tent and other facilities for the event, which attracted about 900 attendees last year. Norske farm day is intended to be a customer appreciation day as well as a consumer event.

Next Board meeting: Are we going to stick with Tuesdays? Some members have conflicts. After discussion, the board agreed to move the meeting to **the second Wednesday of the odd months.**

This year's meetings: 5/13, 9/9, 11/11

The July meeting is usually the annual picnic. Kevin has volunteered to host it. Further discussion was tabled until the next meeting.

Kevin: SARE grant program. The SARE PDP RFP is out. Should GrassWorks apply for it?

Laura and Kevin shared an idea for a grant project. The idea would be that GrassWorks would provide funding for several regional grazing network coordinators. The coordinators would engage local agency staff, provide them with training to run a grazing network and work to establish regional collaboration to support the grazing network. The grant would provide salary dollars and funding to pay for mailings and other organizational work that could be provided to the agencies to cover the costs.

Motion to write a proposal to SARE PDP program. Peter/Larry. Motion carried. One Nay vote.

5. 2015 Grazing Conference – Heather Flashinski

Heather was unable to attend.

Kevin distributed a brief report.

- 327 people in attendance, including 44 speakers and 65 trade show staffers
- 32 sponsors
- 54 exhibitors
- Profit: \$22,283.58
- We will get a full report at the next board meeting.

Discussion was held regarding potential change of venue as well as change of timeframe. Heather expressed concern about the time just after the holidays. It's challenging doing final preparation and communication during the holidays. Board members thought we could move it back a week, but most agreed that we don't want to move it later than that so we avoid competing with the MOSES conference.

Wally has been contacted by the Paper Valley Raddison as a potential site for next year. This will be put off until the next meeting. Discussion was held regarding going back to Chula Vista or identifying another location. We will talk about this further with Heather.

Motion to set the conference dates for 2015 as January 21-23, with second option 1/28-30: Wally/Julie. Motion carried. Wally amends his motion to include the prior weekend as an option, 1/14-16. Julie seconds. Motion carried.

Discussion was held regarding evaluation of the conference—our impressions as well as comments from others that we heard. Kevin asked how we could boost attendance further. Board members discussed audiences who we could attract. Jerold suggested approaching the Woodland Owners Assoc. to connect with silvopasture interests. David Heidel suggested that there seems to be a lot of interest among CSA farmers who are thinking about getting into small scale livestock. Laura: we need to ensure that we maintain a beginner track. Kevin: we had a good modern dairy track, a good organic track. Vance: important to keep mainstream dairy focus. Larry: beef cow-calf guys would be a good audience.

Motion to have the executive committee negotiate a contract with Heather to manage the 2016 Grazing Conference. David H/Wally. Motion carried.

Discussion was held regarding having Ray Archuleta, the NRCS Soil Health expert, speak at the conference. The board endorses this idea and instructs Heather to contact him and get our conference on his calendar.

6. Grazing Coalition – Brian Pillsbury

NRCS (Jimmy Bramblet) wants GrassWorks to commit to being a statewide steering committee for grazing in the state. Wants GrassWorks to commit to sponsoring a grazing coalition for the state. Julie: would regional grazing networks be interested in working with GrassWorks in this capacity?

Kevin and Paul both said that it was their impression that about \$400,000 might be available, with 10% to 15% indirect possible.

NRCS-DATCP mtg. DATCP is not interested in administering the program.

NRCS report to GrassWorks the number of EQIP contracts (right now between 480-500 contracts that include grazing. They are scattered throughout the state.

There is some limited opportunity to utilize these funds a little bit for education (sponsoring workshops and pasture walks).

Paul stated that Marathon County has the capacity to administer these funds. Board members were unsure that GrassWorks is able to do the administration, some stated that it would be worthwhile for GrassWorks to lead this effort and perhaps contract with Marathon County for administration.

Motion made for GrassWorks to host a meeting with RC&Ds and other interested stakeholders to explore opportunities for administering NRCS technical assistance funds. Meeting to be held between now and our next board meeting in May: Julie/Wally. Motion carried.

7. Meadow Fescue – Larry Smith

Larry gave a history of the development of Hidden Valley Meadow Fescue. Mike Casler at US Dairy Forage Center is trying to commercialize seed production. Larry is producing seed and has worked with UW to approach Byron Seed. Byron Seed has not returned Larry's calls, so he does not know if they're interested in moving forward with the partnership. Larry will have about a ton of seed at the end of this year. Jill stated that she had talked with Dan Olsen who said that it is his understanding that Byron is interested in going ahead with it.

Discussion was held regarding sowing the seed on farms around the state and determining if it grows as well across the state as it has in the trials.

Kevin said that Dan Olsen offered about \$2000 per semi-load of Hidden Valley. Larry says that GrassWorks should receive more than that. Vance suggested about 15 to 20% of sales.

8. Ag Coalition – Julie Engel, Kevin Mahalko, Laura Paine

Kevin summarized what the Ag Coalition does and why we are involved.

9. NSAC Membership/Letter/Committee Conference Call – Kevin Mahalko

National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition membership is up for renewal. It is \$100.

Motion to approve paying the membership fee: Larry/Dave V. Motion carried.

Laura described the NSAC list serve that provides a summary of ag related legislation and news

Motion for GrassWorks to sign on to the letter to Senator Baldwin supporting full funding of the conservation programming that was approved in the Farm Bill: Julie/Larry. Motion approved.

10. DATCP – Theresa Feiner

Theresa described her role versus Angie Sullivan's role. Angie works directly with producers on educational activity. Theresa's work is focused on marketing and organizational development. She can help GrassWorks in those areas.

11. Other Business. None.

12. Next Board meeting date: Wednesday May 13, 2015, 10:00 am - 2:00 pm, Schmeckle Reserve

13. Adjourn

Motion to adjourn: Dave Vetrano, Wally Sedlar. Motion carried.

Meeting adjourned at 2:15 pm.