

GrassWorks board meeting
November 17, 2015
Schmeekle Reserve

Board members present: Kevin Mahalko, Julie Engel, Dave Heidel, Larry Smith, Laura Paine

Staff: Jill Hapner, Heather Flashinski

Advisors: Brian Pillsbury, Jerold Berg, Vance Haugen, Paul Daigle, Theresa Feiner

Meeting was called to order at 10:20 am.

Agenda and Minutes review

Minutes from the September 24, 2015 were reviewed.

Motion to approve Larry/Dave. Motion carried.

Financial report

The financial report was reviewed by Jill. She also reported on the status of the GrassWorks foundation. We have about \$13,000 in it. It is invested in the stock market and lost money during 2015, as did most of the stock market. Discussion was held on the fees charged for managing the fund by the Community Foundation of Northcentral WI. It appears that they charge about 1% for administration, which is relatively high.

Motion to approve the financial report. Julie/Dave. Motion carried.

Executive Director's report

Grant support

Clif Bar Grant. Jill talked about the new grant from the Clif Bar Family Foundation. This grant is for the Grazing Ambassadors program. We have five official grazing ambassadors (Anders Gurda, Kirsten Jursek, Molly Meyers, Terry Groth, and Cherrie Nolden). We have had five presentations this year so far. Discussion was held regarding what kinds of talks.

Organic Valley. We also have two separate grants from Organic Valley, one for the Ambassadors program and another for grazing sticks.

SARE PDP Grant. Jill described the new SARE Professional Development we have. It is for \$74,653 over two years. The project will involve four RC&Ds in addition to GrassWorks. GrassWorks has hired Kirsten Jursek to coordinate the grant. She is working on setting up a meeting to launch the effort. The goal of the project is to get some funding back into the local grazing networks to focus on soil health.

NRCS Grazing Planning funds. The NRCS funding that we have received (\$49,923) to do grazing planning. We have proposed to write 30 grazing plans and a number of follow ups to existing grazing plans. Brian stated that most of the need that NRCS has identified are in southwestern WI. They have 20 people who need plans in that area. One of GrassWorks' goals is to utilize the existing grazing specialists as much as possible for this work. Discussion was held about how to balance the need around the state versus what NRCS would like to target. GrassWorks is interested in spreading the money around the state as much as possible. Marathon County is administering the program.

Pending grants. Two grants are pending. Jill has asked for \$5000 from the Organic Valley Farmers Advocating for Farmers grant program for refreshing the GrassWorks website. She is also requesting funding \$10,000 from AgStar. This funding can be used for general operating funds. They cover the Northwest part of the state.

Communications

Discussion was held regarding getting more facebook and twitter presence for GrassWorks. Theresa agreed to do the posting. She suggested doing Instagram as well. Theresa suggested two posts a week: one that is educational/promotional and another that is more fun, engaging.

Membership: GrassWorks currently has 86 members. The Board agrees that we should be able to have at least 100 members. Conference attendees can become a member and get a discounted registration. Jill would like to send out renewal notices to each member to make sure people renew their memberships.

Next Board meetings

The next two board meetings are at the Grazing Conference. There will be the Annual Meeting on Friday January 15th at 12:30 pm. The board will also meet on Saturday, January 16th at 7 am. This is where the change in officers will take place. No Thursday morning meeting will be held. All board members who have GrassWorks displays should bring them and we will put them out during the conference. At the Saturday meeting, we will redistribute and restock the displays.

Board nominations

Kevin and Matt have both served their two three year terms and will need to go off the board. Julie is leaving as well after her first three year term. Matt and Kevin are Northwest. Julie is Southeast. Bylaws: up to 11 board members, two from each quadrant and up to 5 at-large. Discussion was held regarding who should be asked to join the board. Mark and Dawn Mrchinski were suggested. They have sold their cows and may have some time. They both have education backgrounds. Otto Weigand was also suggested. He is interested in coming onto the board.

Julie, because she is going off the board, needs to transfer some duties. She has one of the displays that she will have to transfer to someone else. She is also the treasurer, so we need to transition this responsibility to another board member. This transition will take place into March, so that she will keep track of the books through the conference wrap up. Julie also does the 'power mails' and 'grazing gazette' writing and management. She will continue to do these last two after she is off the board.

Motion to accept the Executive Director's report. Larry/Julie. Motion carried.

2016 Grazing Conference Report

Heather reminded board members that the final program will be different from the brochure that was sent out. She has all of the speakers lined up. She has quite a few sponsors, but is looking for more. Right now we have \$28,000+ in sponsorships.

Discussion was held regarding whether GrassWorks should give out attendee information to vendors. The board consensus was that we should not give out the information. It was agreed that we could add a checkbox for registrants to say whether they want to receive vendor solicitations or not. We will consider next year to include the checkbox next year. This year, vendors will have the opportunity to put materials into the conference participant bag.

Registrations and publicity: we are at 20 registrations at this time. Our conference is the same dates as the Local Food Summit this year. Heather is interested in help getting the word out. Of the 20 registrants, only two are dairy farmers. Heather has talked with Bridget about getting the word out to dairy farmers.

Auction: Dan Olson is planning to coordinate the auction, however his wife is expecting around that time, so board members may need to step up. Board members should ask their local businesses to donate.

Raffle: Colleen Hanson has donated a painting for the past several years. She has requested that we raffle it off this year so that younger people have a chance to compete for it. Dan Olson's quilt donation will also be raffled off this year. Board members will be expected to sell raffle tickets.

Food: Heather has a list of food suppliers from last year. She is especially interested producers who are willing to donate product. Julie offered to use her contacts through Willy Street Coop to obtain the vegetables.

Happy hour. Randy Cutler will provide one keg for Friday and DGA will buy two kegs for Thursday night. Board members agreed that we could probably each chip in \$20 for a fourth keg. Randy Cutler is the Grazing Advocate this year. Paul will do the award plaque.

Motion to accept conference planner report. Wally/Dave. Motion carried.

Meadow Fescue update

Larry Smith gave an update on the Meadow Fescue project. One problem is that this species needs to be vernalized or it won't set seed. That's why it can't be produced in Oregon where most of the grass seed production is done. Larry has been working with Byron Seed to get Hidden Valley Meadow Fescue out on the market. Byron is working on sending seed up to their supplier in Canada to increase. There has been a problem with white cockle seed contamination, so that hasn't gone anywhere yet. Larry is now working with Allied Seed to see if they will be able to produce seed for us. They are only willing to pay \$0.07 per pound. Byron is offering \$0.25 per pound.

Larry is having trouble communicating with the Byron Seed rep, Chad Hale. We are waiting for him to get back to Larry on moving forward. Should we go to Allied Seed instead? The board decided that we should try harder to connect with Byron.

Motion to direct Jill to contact Dan Olson to determine where Byron is at with developing the variety. If Jill is unable to connect with Dan, Laura will contact Larry Hawkins who is Dan's boss and has signed the contract. If we are unable to get a plan in place by the January board meeting, we will consider alternative options. **Kevin/Julie. Motion carried.**

Ag Coalition participation

We need to find a replacement for Julie, who is our rep on the committee. Larry said that he may be able to serve as the rep. Several board members serve as backups, so if Larry were unable to attend, there are others to step in. Julie shared that GrassWorks is providing lunch in December. Different members of the coalition sponsor the lunch for each monthly meeting.

Motion to close discussion on the Ag Coalition. Kevin/Larry. Motion carried.

National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition

Kevin gave a brief report on his visit to NSAC when he was in Washington D.C. Discussion was held regarding who on the board is our representative for NSAC and whether they are on NSAC's list for correspondence. Jill stated that Cheyenne is our rep on that coalition.

Other business

Jerold shared an idea he had about giving an award for youth who show pastured/grass-fed animals at county fairs. Jill said that this would probably be a fundable project. Foundations like to fund youth projects like this. Other ideas included encouraging fairs to have a grass-fed class. Vance said that it would need to be on an individual county basis because each county fair is a separate entity.

Discovery Farms has a meeting coming up on December 15th. Should GrassWorks have a booth?

Motion to adjourn at 2:20 pm. Larry/Wally. Motion carried.