

WAEF Board Meeting Minutes
December 12, 2004

Board members in attendance: Mary Vymetal-Taylor, Carrie Hembree, Gail Epping, Betsy Parker, Jeremy Higgins, Michelle Hartwig, Mary Holleback,

Board members not in attendance: Rebecca Westfahl, Nancy Saulsbury, Angela Vlies

Within these minutes, please note that an * indicates that a written document exists to support and supplement the information provided. Upon reviewing the minutes, each Board member should confirm whether or not they possess these documents.

The WAEF Board meeting was called to order by Chair Mary Vymetal-Taylor at 10:16am on December 12, 2004. The meeting was held the Wisconsin Center for Environmental Education (WCEE) in Stevens Point, Wisconsin.

I. READING OF THE MINUTES

The *minutes from the October 29 Board meeting were read. Carrie moved to approve the minutes as read. Gail seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

II. PUBLIC INPUT

There was no public input.

III. Treasurer's Report

The *Financial Committee report was reviewed. Budget and financial materials that had been printed out by Mary VT were not available. Gail went over projected totals as compared to actual YTD. Our projected total income for 04-05 is \$54,543. Our YTD income is \$23,770. Our projected total expense for 04-05 is \$37,900. Our YTD expenses are \$16,208.

It was suggested we start tracking Board of Directors mileage/other expenses that are not submitted for reimbursement as donations. Volunteer hours, also, could be tracked this way using the rate of \$16 per hour. This will allow for an accurate account of the "worth" of WAEF – take into account the value of donated time and expenditures for travel, etc.

In the future, the budget needs to become a more realistic set of projections of expenditures. Currently, we project to spend more than we actually spend.

Betsy asked for the Finance Committee to clarify the role of Ellen Rulseh. It was explained that Ellen did some research on behalf of WAEF—research to find out how other state organizations fundraise for dollars beyond membership fees and conference registration income. Mary VT assisted Ellen in this research by posing the question to other state organizations via the NAAEF Affiliates network. Mary VT has the raw data that was collected from other states.

Fall conference registration fees included membership fees for attendees who were not members previously to attending the fall conference. This membership fee income will be reflected in the budget; however, as it stands right now, they will be reflected as fall conference income rather than membership income. In order to get an accurate record of membership fee income, these dollars should be separated from conference registration and inputted as membership fees in the budget.

Ron Ligman of Ligman and Associates, WAEE's accountant, approves of our budget method and framework.

IV. Administrative Assistant's Report

WAEE AA Carol Weston submitted a *report of her activities from October through December. She spent a great deal of time learning Quickbooks and streamlining our Access database.

V. Committee Reports

Management – The *report from the December 2 Management Committee meeting was available for review. WAEE officer transition was completed and materials were moved. The website is being continuously updated and monitored. Carol Weston and Carrie have been working with University of Wisconsin College of Natural Resources fiscal officer Ian Goldberg to organize and document accurate financial procedures for WAEE. Mary VT shared information about financial documents that would be asked for if WAEE was ever audited by the IRS. She also shared information from Iowa – they were audited and lived to tell the tale. It was determined that Carol Weston should begin assembling the IRS-required documents in the WAEE office so that we would be ready if we were ever audited. Carol should be able to do this relatively easily with our accountant and Ian Goldberg assistance.

Recommendation: WAEE needs to come up with some way to reward exceptional service given by an administrative assistance. WAEE's contract with UWSP limits our AA salary to \$10 per hour. However, we should find some way to reward an AA whether through monetary support to work on special projects or other incentives to continue good work.

Conference – A *Membership Committee report was available for review. The Winter Workshop 2005 brochure is being printed, but a few issues existed prior to printing. The keynote for Winter Workshop turned out to be quite expensive, but Steve Sandstrom from Northland College, the Workshop Chairperson, is shelling out \$600 from his own budget to help pay for the keynote. Hooray for Steve!

A discussion began about the development and distribution of a Winter Solstice Card to WAEE members as a promotion for Winter Workshop. This topic was moved to New Business.

Mary VT brought up news from NAAEE concerning their annual fall conference. The NAAEE Board of Directors, while at the NAAEE conference in Biloxi in fall 2004, approved a regional rotation for their annual fall conference. NAAEE wants their 2006 conference to be in Wisconsin's region, preferable in Wisconsin itself. The "Conference Host Application" materials will come out in February 2005. When hosting an NAAEE annual fall conference, the host state is responsible mainly for field trips, entertainment, and local promotion. The brunt of the conference would be run by NAAEE personnel. There are many pros and cons to consider before deciding if Wisconsin wants to put in a bid to host the 2006 NAAEE annual fall conference. We should consider this again when we have the "Conference Host Application" materials in hand. WAEE member Jody Henseler of the Manitowoc Public School District has already expressed interest in chairing the WAEE 2006 Fall Conference. We would obviously want to let her know of the NAAEE possibility soon, as we would be unlikely to host BOTH an NAAEE annual fall conference AND a separate WAEE fall conference, but would likely combine the two.

Membership – A *Membership Committee report was available for review. A brief discussion ensued about how we should handle communication that is submitted to WAEE by its members and member organizations, such as their newsletters or events. An example was brought up of the Ellwood H. May (aka Maywood) Environmental Park in Sheboygan. They recently received correspondence from WAEE that asked that WAEE be taken off the mailing list for their newsletter. Why would we want to insult our member organizations by doing this? No one had any idea!

Networking – No report

Advocacy – Gail shared her experiences working with an Advocacy Group at the 2004 Environmental Education Forum, held in early December. Other participants in this group included Kathe Conn, Dean Sauers, Mary Pardee, and Wendy Wiesensal. Ideas were discussed such as online pages on the WAEE website featuring tools for advocacy and action alerts. Kathe Conn has been working on an Advocacy Toolkit for NAAEE and presented a session about this topic at the NAAEE fall conference in Biloxi. Gail has been contacting other nonprofits to find an advocacy resource person to perhaps attend our Winter Workshop, such as Caryl Terrell, the Director and Lobbyist for the Wisconsin Chapter of the Sierra Club. The "Making a Difference" booklet, focusing on Wisconsin EE advocacy, was mentioned. There are also other advocacy resources that we could make available to our members. We could do workshops, member outings, or a toolkit for our members. Does WAEE need a paid position to facilitate advocacy? The bottom line: we can advocate for EE by sharing information and tools with our members, but we cannot specifically tell them

how to vote. A good starting point for WAEE and Advocacy would be to upload advocacy tools onto the website. Kathe Conn may be willing to share information from her NAAEE Advocacy Toolkit.

Student Report – We had a record number of students run for the Board for 2005. Could we develop an online forum on our website for students to chat about WAEE?

VI. Liaison Reports

a. Spring Adventure Workshop – No report

b. Project Learning Tree – No report

c. Wisconsin Conservation Hall of Fame – No report

d. Nature and Environmental Center Section – Gail will share a report from the Section meeting she facilitated at the Fall Conference. There were six participants of the Section meeting – a quick comment is that Northeast WI feels out of the WAEE loop. It is time to reinvigorate this Section of WAEE, perhaps with a pre-conference workshop at the 2005 fall conference.

e. WEEB – The upcoming WEEB deadline is January 15, 2005. The 2005 fall conference committee is thinking about submitting a grant.

f. NAAEE Affiliate's Report – NAAEE is starting up a capital campaign. Having a regional network for conferences will strengthen NAAEE.

g. Ice Age Park & Trail Foundation Education Committee – Education is being phased out of the strategic plan of the Ice Age Park & Trail Foundation. Previously, they had a plan for a stateside education coordinator and regional educators.

OLD BUSINESS

a. Intra-Board Communications Policy – After being discussed at the last several Board meetings, this was determined to be not a policy but a procedure. The only action is to hope people will follow it.

b. Electronic Voting – Much of the same discussion. What happens if a Board member does not vote? Does a motion need be to unanimously approved electronically in order to pass? How much time should be given for an electronic vote? What kinds of motions can be decided by electronic vote? How are electronic votes brought to the Board?

ACTION ITEM: Carrie will rewrite with Mary VT's assistance to submit for a final reading and vote at the January Board meeting.

c. Wisconsin EE Forum – A summary of this event was given. Board members who attended were invited to share their opinions/reflections from the Forum. Active follow-up from the Forum can be expected by participants.

d. MEEC MOU Steering Committee – No report. This is now a standing report under the committee reports.

e. Elections – The Election timeline needs to be enforced stringently. The Board should maintain stricter oversight of the entire Election process. Promotion should also be considered; it is commonly believed to be a duty of the Elections Committee although this is not reflected in the Elections Committee description in the WAEE Board Book. Better promotion is needed.

The Kansas state environmental education organization has a handbook for prospective board members. This group also strives to develop Board member diversity through various means such as Board profiles.

In order to facilitate more interest in Board service, there should be better incentives for being on the Board. Can Board members get free or discounted conference fees? What other incentives can be developed?

ACTION ITEM: The Management Committee and other interested parties should plan and budget for providing incentives for Board members. Action should also be taken to develop a new Board member handbook.

The student Board members should include some funds in their annual budget for student Board member promotion. Meanwhile, we only received nominations from Stevens Point student to serve on the 2005 Board.

ACTION ITEM: The Management Committee and other interested parties should plan and budget for providing incentives for Board members. Action should also be taken to develop a new Board member handbook.

Jeremy moved to suspend the bylaw that requires the two WAEE student Board members to be from different colleges or universities. Gail seconded. Discussion: Since several Stevens Point students were enthusiastically pursuing roles on the WAEE Board, we should allow more than one Stevens Point student to serve. The motion passed unanimously.

f. WAEE Electronic Newsletter – A template is set. We need to set an editorial schedule of topics to include in each newsletter. How many newsletters should WAEE send out per year? The decision was **four**. Member input should be solicited in each newsletter in some way. If this is done, Carol Weston should be informed as to what to do with said input when it reaches the WAEE email inbox.

ACTION ITEM: Betsy and Carrie will work to develop the first issue of the WAEE Electronic Newsletter and an editorial schedule of topics.

Unanswered Question: if a non-member wants our newsletter, should we require a subscription fee?

NEW BUSINESS

a. Dean Sauers bylaw change request

ACTION ITEM: There will be an announcement of all bylaw change proposals, including Deans, at Winter Workshop. Shortly after, WAEE will send out an announcement and voting mailing to members about proposed bylaw changes. The deadline for voting must be at least 30 days after the postmarked date of the original mailing.

ACTION ITEM: Board members shall go over the bylaws and submit a recommendation for change to the Chair.

c. New Board member training – Jeremy shared highlights from the *Proposal for WAEE Regional Structure. The DNR regional structure is used as the geographical basis for the WAEE divisions because it is an easily recognized and accepted structure. At the 2004 Environmental Education Forum, a number of participants expressed interest in the development of stronger regional networks. This could be accomplished through WAEE via this Regional Structure plan. The Networking Committee should be responsible for developing the WAEE Regional Structure. A Regional Coordinator will be chosen for each region. It is suggested that face-to-face meetings occur between the WAEE Regional Structure Coordinator (member of WAEE Networking Committee) and individual Regional Coordinators.

Gail moved to approve this proposal and for Jeremy/Networking Committee to move forward with this initiative. Carrie seconded. There were seven votes in favor and one abstention.

d. Communication with New Board members – Are new Board members and Board member candidates being communicated with in a professional manner?

e. Board meeting attendance and responsibilities at Winter Workshop 2005 – There are no Board member responsibilities at Winter Workshop beyond attending the Board Meeting from 3pm – 6pm on Friday, January 28. Board members are also invited to attend the new Board member training from 1:30pm – 3pm on Friday, January 28.

ACTION ITEM: Mary VT will follow up with Steve Sandstrom to ensure that no other Board input is needed.

f. Awards Committee – This item was not discussed.

g. WAEE member mailing list (when members email us activities and events)

Can the website feature a log-in feature that allows authorized site visitor to input news and events? We could limit this benefit to member organizations. It was determined that this is a somewhat difficult function to include on an UWSP website. It would also be problematic to assign and distribute user names and passwords. While there is certainly a need for a comprehensive website listing all EE events and news from around the state, it may be that WAEE and its website are **not** the appropriate providers of such a tool.

h. State EE issues – Seven EE positions are being cut within the DNR and Mackenzie Environmental Education Center may be closing. Board members are encouraged to send letters to the Governor and DNR about these issues. In addition, WET, WILD, and PLT are incredibly diminished within Wisconsin DNR.

ACTION ITEM: Draft a letter to send to the rest of the Board by Thursday, December 16.

WAEE Winter Solstice Card – To send it out or not. One suggestion: wait until the next solstice in summer—we have very little communication with members in summer and a solstice card could be a timely piece in June. Or we could go ahead and do it in January and include promotions for Winter Workshop, Spring Adventure Workshop, and Fall Conference 2005.

Michelle moved to adjourn the meeting at 3:11pm. Gail seconded. The motion to adjourn passed unanimously.