

Grand Traverse Audubon Club

Board Meeting Minutes

Feb 15, 2024

1. Meeting called to order at 6:02 pm by John Imboden
2. Roll Call
 - a. Present: Kathy Flegel, Kirk Waterstripe, Kathie Wiley, John Imboden, Sharon Benjey, Jared Gugnitz, Tom Comfort
 - b. Absent: none
3. Approval of January meeting minutes
 - a. Will add list of members absent to the minutes
 - b. Motion to approve minutes by Tom Comfort, seconded by Sharon Benjey. Unanimously approved.
4. Agenda
 - a. Additional Items:
 - i. Kathy Flegel: Monitoring website email address
 - ii. Kathie Wiley: Questions about the board listing in the Member Directory
 - iii. Kirk Waterstripe: Review of calendar of events
 - iv. Kathy Flegel: Who should have the code to the door for the membership meeting? This was resolved quickly as Kathie also already has the code.
5. Introductory Comments – John Imboden
 - a. none
6. Big Picture Items for 2024
 - a. Direction of Organization
 - i. What is our relationship to Michigan Audubon?
 1. Tom reports that there are no real requirements or formalized “swearing in process”, just so long as we don’t do anything contrary to the Michigan Audubon, or subvert their operations.
 - ii. Kirk prepared a draft of our values and mission, as well as some examples of the activities we conduct to support those. This document will be included as an addendum to these minutes.
 1. How do we decide which goals to emphasize? Maybe a survey to the membership to see which goals are most important to them.
 - iii. John would like to see the focus remain narrow, so that we have a greater chance of being successful.
 - iv. How to get younger folks interested? Washtenaw Audubon Club has been traditionally pretty good at engaging with younger folks. Also the Wisconsin BIPOC Birding Club. Maybe we can reach out and see if they have any guidance.

- b. To Profit or not to Profit - Do we want to pursue official non-profit designation?
 - i. Tom recommends we discuss this with the Petoskey Audubon club, as they have been through this process.
 - ii. Most of the cost would probably be in lawyer fees to make sure the paperwork is in order. Not sure how much this would be, but other organizations have spent \$5k, ours would likely be much less.
 - iii. Requirements:
 - 1. General public must have access and it must be of benefit to all. We seem to meet that.
 - 2. Minimum board population is 3: President, Secretary, Treasurer
 - iv. Downsides
 - 1. Paper work – initial for the filing
 - 2. Paperwork – ongoing as things change, even board member changes
 - v. Benefits
 - 1. This would let donations be tax deductible, and costs incurred for organization related expenses would also be tax deductible.
 - 2. Eligibility for grants
 - 3. Some organizations will only donate to an official non-profit
 - vi. Need to decide whether to pursue 501(c)(3) vs. 501(c)(4) or stay as is. If this changes, it would need to be approved by the membership.
 - 1. **John to draft an email to send to the membership, to gauge interest in this process, and see if anyone has expertise or interest in the areas of non-profit designation or definition of values and mission.**
- 7. Recap of January General Meeting
 - a. Nominating Committee
 - i. No one volunteered for the committee
 - ii. Kathy to send an email to the bird alert
 - b. Budget was approved by the membership
- 8. Treasurer's Report – Kathie Wiley
 - a. Balances
 - i. General - \$5824.92
 - ii. Walter Hastings - \$1312.41
 - b. Membership counts
 - i. 141 members
 - ii. 18 past due - cutoff is March 1st for payment, otherwise they will be dropped
- 9. Proposed job descriptions – Where will these live going forward? Maybe a short version in the bylaws and an extended document elsewhere.
 - a. Liaison – Tom presented his list. **John to review prior to next meeting.**

- b. Secretary – Jared presented his list, and some modifications were discussed. **Jared to modify and redistribute.**
 - c. Lists of proposed job descriptions will be included as an addendum to these minutes.
10. Cash Reserve Amount
- a. Kathie proposed keeping \$5000 in the general fund and \$1000 in the Walter Hastings fund. This would represent about 3 years of operating expenses.
 - b. Proposal for addition to the bylaws: “Funds in excess of \$5k in the general fund and \$1k in Walter Hastings at the end of any calendar year will be used for donations to be identified at the following calendar year’s January board meeting, unless a clear capital raising objective has been identified.” All board members are in support of this.
 - c. **Kathie to investigate the possibility of purchasing a CD with part of our cash reserves.**
11. TADL Library Booth and Green Elk Rapids
- a. Materials needed
 - i. We have probably 200-250 rack cards. We think this will be enough for these 2 events.
 - ii. We can order more after the TADL event if needed and have them in time for the Elk Rapids event.
 - iii. **Kathie to confirm which print shop in town has the electronic copy of the rack cards.**
 - b. Volunteers
 - i. **John will mention the need for volunteers for these events at the next membership meeting**
12. Upcoming membership meetings
- a. March – Scott Sneed
 - b. April – Maybe Nate Crane and Brian Allen – **Kirk to confirm**
 - c. Fall – **Sharon to follow up with MSU to see about a program about insects**
13. Monitoring website general email account
- a. **Kathy to see about transferring the email forward to Jared.**
14. Events
- a. No events scheduled for March
 - b. Still need a leader for the Arcadia Marsh trip
15. Board
- a. Vice President will be listed as vacant
 - b. Tom Comfort will be listed as Liaison
 - c. Add member at large – Sharon Benjey
16. Agenda and date for next board meeting
- a. Should the general meetings be on the 3rd Thursday of the month instead of the 4th?
 - b. May Birdathon
 - c. Review of Kirk’s draft of Values and Mission
 - d. Next meeting will be March 14th 6-8 PM

17. Adjournment
 - a. Motion made by Kirk Waterstripe to adjourn. Seconded by Kathie Wiley.
 - b. Meeting adjourned at 7:53 PM

Addendum 1: Draft of Values and mission

Prepared by Kirk Waterstripe, presented to the board 2/15/24

Values and Mission

As an organization, we value:

- Birds and the habitats that support them
- Wild and wild-ish spaces
- Each other, from the bird-curious to the life-long birder
- Inclusive opportunities for birding
- The club's ability to thrive in the years to come

Our mission is to provide inclusive opportunities for people to enjoy and learn about birds and the ecosystems on which they depend, and to support efforts to protect these ecosystems in our region.

How do we do that?

1. Maintain and grow the fiscal health of the organization
 - a. Increase memberships
 - b. Establish other sources of revenue
 - c. Responsible management of fiscal resources
2. Education
 - a. Birding outings
 - b. Educational programs (meetings?)
 - c. Through media, including online (unpaid internship for social media?)
 - d. Donations to educational efforts of others
 - e. Educational projects (bird book library, Birding Backpacks, etc.)
3. Outreach
 - a. Partnerships with local organizations (TADL, GER, Norte?, ...)
 - b. Presence at public events (MakerFaire, NatureFest, ...)
 - c. Grand Traverse Band?
 - d. Young birders!
4. Citizen Science
 - a. Biodiversity inventories (GTRLC & others)
 - b. Christmas Bird Counts
 - c. Breeding Bird Surveys
5. Conservation (form Conservation Committee to monitor and propose actions?)
 - a. Support for land acquisition projects
 - b. Bird housing & monitoring
 - i. Purple Martin colony
 - ii. Chimney Swift tower
 - iii. Loon platform on Boardman Lake
 - c. Donations to DNR's NFWTF
 - d. Vocal and written support for biodiversity at local govt. meetings
 - e. Promote bird-friendly landscaping
6. Social events, open to the public (potlucks, picnics; at least 2x per year?)

Addendum 2: Position duties lists

Liaison

1. Interact with other Charters and report to the GTAC Board as a summary report
2. Share program opportunities from other Charters and MAS.
3. Forward questions and comments to MAS (staff) as requested by the GTAC Board.
4. Report communications from MAS to GTAC or directed to all Charters.
5. Attend Networking opportunities; either in-person or remotely.

Secretary

1. Take minutes at the Board meetings. The minutes should be sent out to board members once completed, and then again several days prior to the next board meeting, for review. The minutes from the previous board meeting should be read at each board meeting for approval.
2. Take minutes at the monthly membership meeting, with an emphasis on capturing Board business. The minutes should be read at the next membership meeting for approval by the membership.
3. Check the public board email account (gtac.board@grandtraverseaudubon.com) and the website contact us email account periodically, and follow up or redirect as necessary.
4. Maintain the membership of the Bird Alert mailing list.
5. Generate and send thank you letters to Walter Hastings donors.
6. Print rack cards as needed.