NETWS Quarterly Board Meeting –Winter 2020

Conference Call

17 Dec 2020, 12:00 pm CST

NETWS Board

President-elect: Will Inselman

President: Shelly McPherron

Past-president: Shaun Dunn

Secretary: Melvin Nenneman

Treasurer: Matt Gruntorad

At-large board members: Sarah Nevison, Jenny Prenosil, Andrew Little, Mercy Manzanares

Members present: Shelly McPherron, Will Inselman, Shaun Dunn, Matt Gruntorad, Mel Nenneman, Andrew Little, Sarah Nevison, Jenny Prenosil, Jess Jurzenski, Eric Zach, Mercy Manzanares, Andrea Orabona, Shelly Deisch, Stephanie Ferraro, Erin Considine.

Meeting called to order at 12:05 pm

The meeting began with introductions of Andrea Orabona (TWS Council Representative), Shelly Deisch (CMPS President) and Stephanie Ferrero (CMPS Vice President). Deisch has just begun her term as President, and one of her goals is to increase communication between CMPS and State Chapters. She mentioned that we should all check out the CMPS newsletter for the latest information from the section, and that she was working to see if there was a way to improve the way email information from CMPS comes out to members, as computer firewalls and email software may prevent these from reaching their audience. She also wanted to clear up any confusion about how State Chapters pay CMPS membership dues (discussed in Treasurer’s report).

Secretary’s report: Nenneman emailed a copy of the 29 June 2020 board meeting minutes to board members in advance of the meeting. Nenneman provided a summary of the meeting minutes for those on the conference call. The biggest items in the minutes were the idea of working to create a stronger environmental lobbying voice for NETWS and other environmental groups working across the state (Conservation Review committee) and discussion about how to hold the 2021 annual meeting given the Covid pandemic (New Business). At this meeting, the board decided to keep our options open, but that a virtual meeting might be the way to go. McPherron moved to accept the meeting minutes as sent and summarized, Prenosil seconded, and the motion passed.

Treasurer’s report: Matt Gruntorad reported that he was able to work with Jess Jurzenski since the last meeting, and now has access to the NETWS accounts and files. Gruntorad put together a 2020 budget progress report, updating the 2020 proposed budget from the annual meeting. The progress report shows the chapter somewhat in the red due to a couple of bills due from the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission for the 2019 and 2020 annual meetings. Once these are paid, we will be in the black again. Gruntorad and Jurzenski talked about the confusion regarding how state chapters send membership dues to CMPS. Some confusion arises because state chapter members who become new or renewing members through the TWS pay the $1.00 membership directly to CMPS, while state chapter members who pay at the State Chapter level do not. In the latter case, the State Chapter’s Treasurer transfers $1.00 of their state membership fee to CMPS. In NETWS, most of the membership renews through TWS, so CMPS gets their membership dues directly from the Parent Society, with only about one third of members paying at the State Chapter level. Deisch asked Gruntorad when would be a good time for NETWS to send their CMPS dues, and Gruntorad (with board agreement) said that he would like to have it done before the end of 2020.

Gruntorad also started putting together a proposed 2021 budget. There are several questions about what the estimated dollar amounts for line items in the budget given that the meeting will be virtual this year (e.g. estimated auction income, keynote speaker fees, catering, registration fees, etc). The programs committee will be able to provide better numbers for the budget in the not too distant future, and there is still time to work on the proposed budget, so no decisions were made for these line items at this time. McPherron moved to approve the treasurers report, Dunn seconded and the motion passed.

Committee reports – these went quick, as we were running short on time

Nominating: Dunn indicated that he had a draft of an email ready to send out to NETWS members seeking nominations for open board positions (President-elect, Secretary, 2 At-large Board members). Dunn indicated he will give members a couple of weeks to submit nominations before he starts twisting arms to get a slate of candidates put together.

Membership: Dunn is still nominally chairing the committee, but would like to hand off to another member interested in the committee. He said that he had just downloaded the NETWS membership roster from TWS to update the membership database. Dunn is actively seeking a new chair for this committee.

Programs: Inselman was on another call, so McPherron gave a very quick rundown of recent Programs committee activity. Planning is underway to hold a 3-day virtual conference the last week in February. There are three proposed themes, with one each day. The ideas are Diversity and inclusion in wildlife, COVID-19 and other diseases and how they impact wildlife management, and Wildlife management in a changing world. Inselman just sent out the call for papers to NETWS membership. One possibility for the conference platform is for NETWS to purchase a Zoom Small Business membership; this would cost around $200.00, and could be cancelled following the meeting. Inselman was also going to check if it would be possible to host the conference on a NGPC Zoom account. The committee is looking for suggestions for keynote speakers, and it was noted that with a virtual conference, it would be possible to have speakers from just about anywhere. The Committee is also working on ideas to increase student involvement, and is looking into potential breakout sessions for students. Little said that since students don’t have the barrier of travel this year, it might be a good year to figure out ways to get students involved. Little suggested that a google survey sent to student chapters and their advisors could be a way to find out what would attract students, and that he would be willing to work on some questions to this end. McPherron rounded out the summary discussing ideas for fundraising in the absence of an auction, and one suggestion was to round up or purchase a smaller selection of nicer items and do a raffle in lieu of the auction.

Conservation Review: Zach presented an idea for consideration to help increase NETWS impact on state issues (legislation, policy), and making a step up from just writing letters. The proposal would have NETWS, possibly with contributions from other like-minded organizations across the state, make an annual budget allocation to support the efforts of the current Duck Unlimited and Audubon Nebraska lobbyist to provide a greater impact for conservation voices in legislation and policy making. The full proposal is attached at the end of the minutes. Zach said there would be some hoops to jump through to make this happen, but that this activity is allowed under TWS policy. Board members Dunn, McPherron, and Prenosil spoke in favor of this proposal. NETWS member Jurzenski moved to add a line item of $500 to the proposed budget to support this effort. Dunn seconded this motion, and the motion passed. Discussion – McPherron said that she supports this proposal, but stated that it would need some further discussion to plan the way forward. Prenosil supported adding $500 to the budget for this, and also suggested that having a voice in the legislature is important and thought the board should be open to increasing this amount in the future. Zach shared a news article about a lawsuit brought against the Nebraska Environmental Trust regarding how funds were allocated by the NET board to various projects. These types of lawsuits may lead to legislation reallocating or reducing funds available for conservation work across the state, reinforcing the importance of having a stronger voice in the legislature.

Information and Education: Considine said not much to report as she was on maternity leave much of the summer, but that she wants to begin working on cleaning up and updating the NETWS web page. Jen Grauer has moved on to a new position, and thus is no longer able to continue putting together the newsletter.

Awards: Little said that he has a group of judges lined up to assess nominations for awards, and now just needs nominations! He has an email ready to send out the NETWS membership to solicit nominations for Wildlife Professional of the Year and Career Professional. Little also reiterated that it would be good to have a list of past award recipients and the year that they were recognized, but acknowledged that there might be gaps in our records to accomplish this task. Board members are encouraged to scour old notes and files to see if we can fill in some of these gaps.

Certification: Wolfe was not available for the meeting, but had talked to McPherron about the idea of setting up a raffle or prize to be awarded to NETWS members attaining certification as an extra carrot to encourage members to work through the application process.

Old Business: McPherron requested that Dunn send out the most recent copies of the chapters Strategic Action Plan and Annual Plan of Operations for review (everybody is busy, it happens).

New Business: One new business item – McPherron said that the Parent Society has sent out some proposed changes to the By-laws for review, and she would be sending them out soon.

Dunn moved to adjourn the meeting; McPherron seconded the motion, and passed by voice vote. Adjourned at 1:09 pm.