

Wye Marsh Annual General Meeting (AGM): February 29, 2020

Call to Order: The meeting was called to order by Dave Robertson at 10:05 am.

Approval of the April 27th, 2019 AGM minutes: Debbie Lovas (moved), Allan Mantel (seconded). Carried¹.

Financials - Thomas Turnbull (Grant Thornton) presented our financial statements and audit:

- The findings were presented to the Board on February 12, 2020.
- Revenue is up by ~\$70,000 as a result of general admissions, memberships, and gift shop sales. There has been a decrease in recreational programs and school visits. Expenses have stayed fairly similar over the past year. Net assets and general operations are in a deficit of \$11,940, but there are positives in the capital assets (\$45,000), the internally restricted fund (\$172,000), and the HCF fund (\$218,000).
- Liabilities are similar to the prior year – Wye Marsh is in the positive.
- The audit includes the amortization, whereas Mary Ann's numbers do not. Therefore, Mary Ann's numbers will show a profit.
- The overall cash flow for the year is a positive \$27,000.

Motions¹:

- Members will receive the financial statements for the fiscal year ending on October 31, 2019. Lucie Thompson (moved), Ashlea Veldhoen (seconded). Carried¹.
- The Board of Directors will appoint Grant Thornton as auditors for the financial year ending October 31, 2020. Allan Mantel (moved), Lucie Thompson (seconded). Carried¹.
- Approve the actions of the Board of Directors for the financial year ending October 31, 2019. Dorothy Harper (moved), Gary Van Gelderen (seconded). Carried¹.
- Appoint Jana Luker, Lucie Thompson, Nicole Horbatiuk, Ashlea Veldhoen and Melanie Dupuis to the Board of Directors for a two year term commencing on February 29, 2020. Allan Mantel (moved), Colin Harper (seconded). Carried¹.

Acknowledgements: Sean Dienes, Jim MacMillan, and Amanda Woodman will be stepping down from the Board and will be missed. Debbie Lovas, Richard Leavens, and Dave Robertson will be returning as Directors.

Report from the Executive Director:

Mary Ann has three goals:

1. Review everything – replace, rebuild, or remain. We have done two software integrations for our finance and donor software. We are looking for a new internet tower and talking to Vianet to have better internet. We are looking to rebrand our education programs to make it “Marsh School”, which Emily Metcalfe would take the lead on. Wildlife care and camps continue to be improved. Camp revenues have now gone up substantially with the addition of PA Day, March Break, and Strike Day camps.
2. Stop lurching: We can't control the weather and we don't have to be at the mercy of what we can't control. We have an annual calendar of events. Our goal is not always to raise numbers, but to make sure we are in line with our competitors.
3. Instill a business mindset into a non-profit environment. When we look at outreach, we don't make a profit, but we get our name out there and people start to come. We must align our mandate with stewardship, education, and public programs. We do not expect to make a profit on stewardship, but we can use it in other programs, such as education and public programs.

Both Mary Ann and Tasha are quite familiar with the daily cash flow. We have not gone to the Hartog Fund in about a year, but we are going to have to this year, as the education visits are hitting us hard (a lot of this is due to the ongoing strikes, however, the school boards are not providing schools with appropriate funding to visit). Teachers must make sure that the program would meet the requirements of the curriculum. We are able to run the occasional programs in schools though and will travel to them. Any busing grants we receive are for Simcoe County, but we do reach out to Toronto and Muskoka, despite the expensive costs. Ideally, we could find some kind of sponsor-to-sponsor program, where we still get paid, but the schools could come without needing to pay. If it is easy to come to us, hopefully that will put us at the fore front against competition.

If we do the gift shop right, we could get a 50% return on the money spent – there is money to be made here. We have \$55,000 in spending currently and are looking to have \$75,000 - \$80,000.

We raised the rates of memberships and got rid of the family pass.

Admissions for the fiscal year are up, education is down. We brought in \$28,000 from Sweetwater last year. Camps were up as we added an extra week, but overnight camp is down. Weddings and birthdays are up. We don't make a lot of money off of workshops – we often break even, but it helps to get the word out about us.

Report from the Board of Directors:

Goals from 2019 AGM:

- Increase number of Board Members: we've increased from 6 to 8 Board Members.
- Increase revenue – we almost broke even this year.
- Increase Environmental Stewardship: Mary Ann's report

- Increase communication and public awareness: Monthly newsletter, website, social media, program promotion, online marketing, and enhanced outreach activities are going strong.

Special note: Bob Whittam, the Father of the Wye Marsh, passed away. We plan to name the display hall after him and republish his book.

2020 Goals:

- Continue to increase Board membership Continue to improve revenue by developing program opportunities, improving budgeting accuracy and revenue and expense designation, increase fundraising efforts, and implement an endowment fund.

Challenges:

- We typically operate on a deficit of \$70,000 - \$80,000 per year and can no longer rely on our reserves to draw from – we need to focus on fundraising.
- There has been a dramatic reduction in revenue from school visits. We cannot rely on estate donations or good weather for special events. Furthermore, the Tay Township dinner would be split between multiple organizations this year. We need to create a true fundraising effort.

2020 Optimism:

- Our Executive Director and all of our staff are extremely dedicated, which is reflected in the increase in all of our metrics.
- We have gained some valuable new Board members with diverse skills and experiences.
- Membership and general attendance are up and steadily increase.
- We have improved our operational consistency and fiscal control.

Members Appeal:

We are asking any interested members or volunteers to help out. This could be through volunteering, membership, being an ambassador, assisting with fundraising, etc. Your contribution is appreciated and instrumental to the Wye Marsh.

New Business:

- Tom (and the outreach crew) continue to bring the birds of prey to outreach events. They are a magnet for people to come and chat with us and are great for promotion.
- Question: Has anyone considered reaching out to private corporations for fundraising? Yes, we currently have a list of corporations that we're working through to see who would be appropriate. The Board would like to focus on the larger corporations, rather than the smaller businesses that are often used for our events as sponsors.
- Jeremy is still the chair of the Stewardship Committee and we continue to struggle to get others to the table. We continue to work out a budget and a stewardship plan, but we do have some grants to help with some of the work that needs to be done. We are

hopeful that as we develop a more structured plan and brand that more people will commit to the committee.

- We are contacting universities that have environmental programs to see if they can support us and we can support them.
- We should look at having Indigenous representation on the Board. We do have a partnership with the Native Friendship Centre currently. We plan to have staff trained and continue to make connections. There are many people and organizations we could reach out to.

Last year was excellent, but we do have a significant challenge ahead of us this year and need to focus on fundraising.

Meeting Adjourned: The meeting was moved to adjourn at 11:37am.

†: It was discovered following the meeting that there had been a procedural oversight during the meeting. Following most of the motions no vote was taken. Upon realizing it I obtained a list of all the voting members in attendance and canvassed them via email for their vote on each motion. There responses are recorded in a document entitled AGM 2020 Procedural correction.