

MINUTES OF COAC CONFERENCE CALL OF 02-12-2018

1. CONVENING. A conference call of the Council of Ohio Audubon Chapters convened at 7:00 p.m. on February 12, 2018. Attending were Betsey Merkel, web consultant for Western Cuyahoga Audubon Society (WCAS); Tom Romito, Mary Anne Romito, Nancy Howell, and Kurt Miske, all of WCAS; Al Dolan and Connie Rubin of Canton Audubon Society (CAS); Mary Ann Wagner of Blackbrook Audubon Society (BBAS); Liz Woedl of Audubon Miami Valley (AMV); Jim Jablonski of Black River Audubon Society (BRAS); Jim Tomko and Mark Demyan of Audubon Society of Greater Cleveland (ASGC); Jackie Augustine of Tri-Moraine Audubon Society (TMAS); and Mark Purdy of Akron Audubon Society (AAS);

2. OPENING COMMENTS. Betsey began the call by making the following points:

a. Betsey stated the mission of COAC.

b. Betsey's research shows a decline in chapter engagement from 58 percent in 2006 to 30 percent in 2017. Our strategy is to counter this trend through workshops and internet communication.

3. DISCUSSION OF FUNDING A WEBSITE.

a. Liz said she didn't think that a new website is worth spending \$9,000 on it. Al agreed.

b. Jim Tomko asked if a new website would serve the general public or just the COAC chapters.

c. All representatives on the call said their chapter have their own websites now.

d. Betsey reported that Jeff Harvey of Audubon Society of Mahoning Valley (ASMV) said we need a resource for open discussion. Betsey said a new website would connect the chapter websites and amplify the work of all of the chapters.

e. Jackie asked how the \$9,000 is broken down. Betsey explained that it includes \$2,500 for construction of the platform, \$300 per year for fixed technology expenses, and \$500 per month for Betsey's skilled labor expenses.

f. Liz said this is too much money. Mark Demyan said Betsey should cut back on the cost and re-evaluate the project.

g. Jim Jablonski said the proposal for spending the money is too vague to justify it, given that the startup cost would be \$9,000 for the first year and \$6,000 for each following year.

h. Nancy asked if we could connect that chapter without a website. Betsey explained that there are other tools that we could use.

i. Liz suggested that Betsey scale down the cost and look at free Google platforms.

j. Mark Demyan asked if anyone has checked with the regional Audubon level to see if support is available for this project. Betsey asked Mark to look into it and he said he would.

4. ABSENTEE CHAPTER REPRESENTATIVES.

a. Betsey said nobody from Firelands Audubon Society and Audubon Society of Ohio was on the call.

b. Betsey asked if anyone could contact Audubon Society of Ohio and try to get someone from that chapter to participate on the COAC board. Liz said she would try.

5. DISCUSSION OF THE MARCH 4 WORKSHOP.

a. Betsey said the purpose of this conference call was to prepare for the March 4 workshop in Geauga County. The topics of conversation at the workshop will be membership and fund raising.

b. Betsey listed the chapter representatives who indicated an interest in making presentations during the workshop. They include Jackie on land purchases; Carly Zeis of AMV on young members; Liz on an art show; Betsey on content marketing; Tom facilitating a discussion on membership and fund raising; and a panel session.

c. Someone asked if funding would be available for travel expenses for the chapter representatives. Liz said that for out-of-town people, overnight expenses should be covered, as well as driving expenses. Mary Anne noted that we paid our own way to COAC meetings in the past. Jackie agreed that people should do this and claim the expenses on their tax returns.

d. Betsey asked how we could cover the cost of catering. Al said we should use the COAC account and others agreed.

e. Betsey asked if people could carpool. Both Jackie said she would pick up chapter representatives along the Route 30 corridor. Liz said she would pick up people in the Dayton area.

f. Liz asked Betsey to use more plain language in her discussion of the website, both on the conference calls and in the workshop.

g. Mary Ann asked how long the workshop would be. Connie said the October 1 meeting (which was six hours long) was too long. Some said the workshop should be shorter than six hours because people have to drive there and back. Jim Tomko said he would be okay with six hours, since lunch would be included. Jim also said people could come early to bird the area. Jackie said 10:00 to 4:00 is optimal. Connie also said the number of presentations would dictate the length of the workshop.

6. ADJOURNING. Betsey adjourned the conference call at 7:56 p.m.