



**WALT Board Meeting – Wednesday, February 17th, 2021
10AM-11AM**

Board present: Steve Cook, Curt Soper, Tim Copeland, Kate Godman, Skip Swenson, Dave Schaub, Rebecca Rettmer (joined at 10:06)

Staff present: Nick Norton

Call to order - 10:03AM

1) Board Business

- a) January 20th, 2021 minutes

Motion: Tim moved to accept the January 20th, 2020 minutes as presented. Curt seconded. All in favor.

- b) HB 1382 and SB 5146 Briefing

As per the WALT Endorsement Policy, Nick notified the board that the Advocacy Committee's approved support for HB1382 (streamlines environmental permitting requirements) and SB 5146 (allows WDFW to indemnify the Corps to access restoration funding) at a Green Light – Level 3. They are pretty straightforward bills, and there is no board action necessary.

Rebecca joined at 10:06

- c) January 2021 financials

Rebecca summarized the January 2021 financials. Given that we're only 1 month in, not much to report. Ended previous year in a good position for this year. At this point, we should just be re-familiarizing ourselves and internalizing the budget for 2021. Dues renewal notices have already gone out and should have those done by end of March. Board asked Nick to review our eligibility for PPP 2nd draw.

Motion: Dave moved to authorize Nick to apply for 2nd Draw PPP convertible loan up to fully eligible amount of qualifying expenses Tim seconded. All approved.

- d) Resolution 2021-1 re: by-laws advocacy



Steve and Nick presented a brief review of proposed changes to by-laws included in Resolution 2021-1: would make a 60% threshold for approving advocacy action at both board and member level, allow the board to delegate advocacy decisions as it saw fit (i.e. to advocacy committee). This has been well-vetted through previous discussion with both the board and membership. Skip asked whether the 60% threshold for advocacy issue approval was discussed with members at the last meeting, as he recalled a potential concern from people. Nick believes it was clearly discussed and supported, but will check the notes. Steve said that the goal is that even with a 60% majority, the concerns of those objecting to the action be seriously considered. Tim added that, like the past situation with carbon tax, members can certainly abstain from voting.

Motion: Rebecca motioned to approve Board Resolution 2021-1. Kate seconded. No further discussion. All in favor.

2) Fundraising Strategy

a) Is a lobbyist our highest priority?

Nick presented an overview of the proposal and the small group work session. Given strategic plan and its five-year goals, the proposal is to hire a lobbyist would serve as step one for capacity building. There was unanimous agreement from the board that this is the highest priority for WALT.

b) How would it be funded?

While the expense has already been approved by the board, there is a desire for board action on release of unrestricted cash and an ongoing expense item in future years. Kate – there's value in building member buy-in for the idea to support ongoing financial support. Curt - reminded the board of the high value to the members of a WALT lobbyist; this is among the highest services provided to members. Curt will be willing to provide additional support from CDLT or via some of his donors to help pay for this additional capacity.

c) When would they start?

Curt – the odd years are always the most active. If we wait until '23, what opportunities might we miss out on?

Nick - preference is to bring the position on in fall '22 as external fundraising is still new to us as an organization; would be nice to have a longer timeframe to assess capacity. Additionally, these policies and coalitions will take time to develop; makes sense to wait.



Tim – acting earlier may make some sense: near-term deadlines help create urgency for fundraising efforts. Secondly, given the 2-year opportunity that the Biden administration has, there may be some legislative action coming that we want to be able to act on (both at state and federal levels).

Curt – thanks to Kate and Tim for bringing up the federal context and opportunities that with attention may flow down to the state level. For this reason, don't necessarily limit our lobbying to the state level.

Nick – the contract lobbyists that we work with are Olympia-focused. Nick would have time and capacity to do the federal work.

Skip – What we're talking about at the federal level is relationship building with our federal elected officials. At the state level, if we are running bills, summer is often the time to start.

Rebecca – if we are going to be depending on our members to support the position on top of whatever major donors we identify, don't fool ourselves that it will be easy. Totally agree with Tim that urgency is vital to the campaign, however, and if we don't have the donors it doesn't matter.

Steve – Columbia Land Trust's '21 budget is already set. We could budget for this in '22. Suggest that we start earlier – could plan on it as a 1-year experiment to see if we can be successful in our fundraising.

Skip – curious about how we got to the budget estimate, which is a very specific number. Is this based in reality? Gut sense is this might be a bit low based on our experience. Is the idea that we would contract for 3 years or write up a grace period?

Nick – would NOT want to enter into a 3-year contract right off the bat. Need to demonstrate their value and be the right fit for our group. The budget is based only on a couple data points, probably needs more vetting (\$36K is based on \$4k/9 months).

Kate – from a fundraising side: it'll take a bit of time to get this program going. In all likelihood, if we go with an earlier launch this will require forward funding which may weaken the pitch

Tim – let's figure out ways for land trusts to support rather than major donors.

Starting in '22 allows the opportunity to demonstrate value to the members (i.e. if you don't support this it'll go away).

Steve – possible informal pledges from members? For us, as members, the earlier start date is preferable.

Skip – The value proposition may be greater for midsize and smaller land trusts. This might factor into the decision about the split in fundraising (inside vs outside dollars).

Steve took a straw poll of the board, which resulted in a close split between starting early ('21) vs later ('22). Probably best to bring this to the members for consideration as their next meeting.



Rebecca – this process reminds me a lot about the past decision-making and commitment from the members to sustain a new ED position. Doing something similar with this lobbyist position could be a good approach.

d) Next Steps

Nick – sounds like there are a few takeaways. Probably should adjust the proposed annual budget up a bit to be conservative, and increasing the percentage we would be looking for from member contributions to 50%. We will include this proposal to the membership at the next meeting and it would be great to have some cheerleading from the board at the meeting.

Meeting Adjourned - 11:01AM