

BLSG Board Meeting
18 June 2020
Unapproved Minutes

Note: on June 3, Wayne Rausenberger resigned his position as Treasurer of the BLSG Board.

Agenda

1. Call to order
2. Covid-19 and safety measures
3. Introduction of guests
4. Chairman remarks(Mike B.)
5. Public comments
6. Approval of the May, 21st 2020 BLSG meeting minutes(Steve B.)
7. Current Affairs
8. Update from the State
9. Treasurers/Budget Report
 1. Current June, 18th 2020
 - Expenditures/Revenue
 - Update on State related funding
 - PR
 - Position
 2. Proposed 2021(Michael B.)
 - Revisions of current spray routes and adulticiding thresholds
 - Logistical data collection of equipment during operations
 - Allocations of State related funding/monies
 3. District finances
 - Access to funds for the continuum of District operations throughout fiscal year
 - Digitalization of accounts payable/receivable
10. Operations report(Will M.)
 - Past
 - Present
 - Future
11. PR(Kerry W./Jay M)
12. District Coordinator position
13. District Committees
14. Other Business
 1. Utilization of Property
 - Heat and insulation for shed
 - Solar panels on roof and/or unusable property
 2. Audit
 3. Accident/incident reporting on BLSG District grounds and/or time(including undisclosed)
15. Adjournment

Please Note: This was a Zoom Meeting. Most Attendees were remote. Mike Blaisdell and two others were at the Stephen Douglas House in Brandon.

In Attendance:

Board Members: Chad Beckwith, Paul Vaczy, Jeff Whiting, Jeff Schumann, Brad Lawes, Rich Russ, Wayne Rausenberger, Mike Blaisdell, Steve Belcher

BLSG-related: Will Mathis, Jay Michael, Bruce Baccei

Guests: Alyson Eastman, Patti Casey, Cary Giguere, Butch Shaw

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 pm.

1. Chair Mike Blaisdell then read an email he had received from Alyson Eastman in response to the circumstances leading to the resignation of Wayne Rausenberger [the full email is appended below]. She noted the resignation and insisted that interactions should be professional and constructive. She noted that invoices were not processed as quickly as might be desired; as it happens, one was held up for a month waiting for confirmation of conformity with the grant parameters. Thereupon, three invoices were approved. She defended the delay with reference to the unusual conditions imposed by the corona virus. Reflecting on relations between the Agency and the BLSG she noted that they could not permit rude or unprofessional behavior, and was taking the opportunity to state expectations.

Mike Blaisdell added that this was the second instance contentious language causing difficulties with the colleagues to the North and insisted on the need for professional conduct.

2. Public Comments

Mike Blaisdell invited comments. Alyson Eastman spoke up to say they were genuine in wanting a good working relationship; that grant-related questions should go to Patti, and other issues might be addressed to her or to Anson Tebbetts. She noted that they were not hiding behind curtains: contact info was freely available on the Agency contact web-page.

Butch Shaw noted at this point that Rep. Jerome was caught in committees and unable to join the meeting.

Cary Giguere spoke up, noting that Dominic Golliot is retiring in October, and is taking ten weeks of accumulated leave in the meantime. When a replacement has been hired he will be introduced to the BLSG staff.

3. Minutes of the 21 May, 2020 meeting

On a motion by Mike Blaisdell, seconded by Paul Vaczy, the minutes of the May 21, 2020 meeting were approved.

4. Current Affairs

A. Mike Blaisdell here addressed the resignation of Wayne Rausenberger. He, Jeff Whiting, and Brad Lawes have been consulting on what measures to take, and feel it is best to have an interim agent while discussions on redefining the role and responsibilities of the Treasurer go forward. They would like to see what responsibilities Eloise Crane, the BLSG accountant, might be able to absorb. In the meantime, they are taking measures to ensure bills are being paid. Brad Lawes has stepped up (and received thanks for doing so).

Rich Russ put a question about Eloise's position.

Paul Vaczy then put a motion that Brad Lawes would be authorized to pay the bills until the Board can redefine the responsibilities of the Treasurer's position. Mike Blaisdell seconded, and the motion passed, with the additional approval of various dogs.

B. State Update

Mike Blaisdell noted a recent email received from Patti Casey, and invited her to speak to the issue. Patti explained that because of the current budgetary situation, they are only authorized quarterly payments, and so while in principle the full grant amount of \$70,000 has been approved, they are only allowed to pay one fourth (\$17,500) in the next quarter, the first of the new fiscal year. Cary Giguere spoke, noting that Patti was only the messenger, and that he and Alyson were there to reassure the BLSG that it wasn't a cut in funding, but simply a shift in the way State operations were being conducted.

Jeff Whiting raised a question: funds would be disbursed quarterly, but the BLSG activities covered by those funds came in the summer quarters. The BLSG might therefore be forced into expenditures exceeding the received amount, since the Fall and Winter quarters are period of inactivity. The BLSG spending pattern does not fit a quarterly pattern of distribution.

Alyson Eastman spoke up to say this issue had been presented to the Administration, and that the Administration and the Legislature were working feverishly on the 'skinny budgets.' Unfortunately, such budgets are also the quickest way to savings. On top of the quarterly limits, there is a request for a 2% reduction. She noted that the BLSG is not the only program for which the quarterly system is a bad fit.

Butch Shaw added that the Legislature expected to pass the 3-month budget in the next week and would then recess until August when they expected much better information on revenue projections. The desire is to fund the programs fully. One drawback is that the Federal funds allocated for Covid relief cannot be used for such programs.

Jeff Whiting noted that the problem for the BLSG was managing cash flow: to spend as needs arose in expectation of reimbursement, or not? A second question was whether the funds allocated quarterly had to be spent in that quarter, or if there could be a roll-over.

Cary answered that they would have to check with the Business Office; year-to-year roll-overs had in the past been requested and approved by the Governor's office. Alyson said they would get an answer from the Business Office, noting that they had to report monthly on some of their grant programs. But they would check with the Business Office and Patti would then report.

Will Mathis put a question about the availability of funds for aerial applications. They seem unlikely for this year. Funds for next year are uncertain. Alyson noted that the Legislature had asked for an accounting of the carry-forward funds, and these could be swept (i.e. reallocated) if the Legislature so chose. She wanted it to be clear that nothing is for certain.

A question was put on the Board's authority to borrow. Mike noted that the Board has a line of credit. Cary Giguere commented that all the Board needed to do was submit an ordinary invoice for payment; whether the services had been paid for through the line of credit or not was not in that picture.

Jeff Whiting at this point noted that towns are pushing their tax deadlines back. Sept. 15 seems to be the earliest towns can send out tax bills, because of the uncertainty over school taxes. This will translate into delays in town payments of the BLSG assessments. Paul Vaczy endorsed the statement.

In answer to the uncertainty about continued State funding, Butch Shaw stepped in. He noted that their budget extended no further than Sept. 30, and so they could offer no clarity. Come mid-August, there will be more information.

5. PR

Jay Michael noted that he and Will Mathis are sharing the duties involving public information.

He suggested that some assurances would be welcome, even in the midst of the uncertainties. Planning is nigh impossible. And the BLSG's limited working capital is a severe constraint on their activities. Cary answered that the only assurance they could offer was that as soon as they know, they will let us know. He added that Butch would probably know more earlier than the Agency.

6. Treasurer's Report and Budget

Note: Will Mathis forward scans of bills and statements to the Board in advance of the meeting. As of May 31, 2020, the bank balances are:

General Funds:	62,667.50
Equipment Fund:	8,362.79

Mike Blaisdell noted that the PR budget had been exhausted. Jeff Schumann was brought online – he had been experiencing technical problems – and spoke on behalf of the LDFLA to say that their Insect Control Committee had voted a grant of \$2,000 to the BLSG, without restrictions. When asked where to send the check, Brad Lawes suggested they simply walk across the street to him, and Jay Michael noted that would save the price of a stamp.

Cash Card

Mike Blaisdell then noted that Will Mathis and his crew have been obliged to pay out of pocket for expenses such as gas and other items. This also affects the Zoom subscription that limited meetings to 40 minutes. He feels this is unfair to the employees, and proposed that we authorize a debit card, linked to a bank account that would be replenished monthly, to allow them to meet district costs without the burden of filing an invoice and awaiting reimbursement. There was the question of oversight: should Will report planned expenses to some-one. Mike observed that he did not think Will would go out and try to buy a \$10,000 sprayer, however much he wanted one. Jeff Whiting noted that if the card was used for regularly budgeted items, they should not require pre-approval.

Mike made a motion to let will have access to a \$500 bank account that is linked to a debit card for use for operations throughout the month. Jeff Schumann seconded, and the motion passed.

Digitalization of Accounts

Mike explained that he thought it would be best if employees were paid through direct deposit. Brad Lawes wondered if Eloise Crane was set up to handle that technology. Steve Belcher noted that the Pittsford Library had recently switched to a system that allowed many bills to be paid electronically, but when Brad questioned whether an outside agency was involved in cutting checks he admitted he did not have the details. Brad said that for his activities an outside (costly) service was involved.

Alyson Eastman, informed that the BLSG receives physical checks, noted that some electronic payments from State agencies can lead to confusion, when the recipient is receiving payments from different agencies. She noted that her Agency does not actually cut checks: that is the prerogative of the Agency of Administration.

7. Operations Report

Will Mathis noted that the weather has been on our side: snow in May, late frosts and then dry weather. So mosquito counts are down. Steve Belcher moved to approve the operations report; Jeff Schumann seconded, and it was approved.

8. Other business

Mike Blaisdell insisted on the need for accident reports, noting that someone had fallen at the shed. Paul approved.

9. Brad Lawes made a motion to approve payment of the bills emailed by Will to the Board. This motion was approved. There was then some discussion about electronic payments from the State and the procedures.

10. Cary Giguere then noted a concern for Patti Casey: in the last year, Eastern Equine Encephalitis (EEE) virus was present in all the states around Vermont. This raises the possibility of the need for an aerial application, reflecting a public health threat. There will be delays in testing the samples, for practical reasons. The likely areas affected would be in the south of the state, bordering Massachusetts.

11. Jeff Whiting moved to adjourn, seconded by Mike Blaisdell, and the meeting was adjourned at 8:03 pm.

The next scheduled meeting is July 16th at 7:00 pm and it will almost certainly again be a Zoom meeting with details to follow.

Email from Alyson Eastman:

From: Eastman, Alyson <Alyson.Eastman@vermont.gov>

Date: Wed, Jun 10, 2020, 3:51 PM

Subject: VAAFMBLSG relationship

To: michaelblaisdell1987@gmail.com <michaelblaisdell1987@gmail.com>

Cc: Giguere, Cary <Cary.Giguere@vermont.gov>

Dear Mr. Chair,

I write to address the relationship between BLSG and AAFM in the wake of your former Treasurer's resignation. As we move forward, it is imperative that all interactions be professional and constructive and that everyone demonstrate courtesy and respect.

I understand that some invoices were not turned around as quickly as preferred and regret any associated inconvenience. I trust you understand, however, that one invoice was delayed a month while we awaited BLSG's assurance that the charged hours properly fit within the grant parameters. Once we had completed invoices, the three most recent ones were reviewed and approved for payment within 8 business days. I hope you can also appreciate that the pandemic—coupled with the approaching fiscal year end—significantly complicated operations for our business office. Nevertheless, all BLSG invoices were reviewed, processed, and paid within approximately 60 days (following proof of grant eligibility), which does not seem unreasonable as we adapted operations to the coronavirus.

We understand that reasonably prompt payment is important and always welcome BLSG's related professional inquiries. But, we cannot permit rude, threatening, or unprofessional

behavior and expect everyone to be courteous and appropriate during all interactions. I recognize that your former Treasurer resigned and anticipate that everyone prefers a productive and respectful relationship, but I am taking this opportunity to reflect a bit and to plainly state our expectations.

Please do share with your Board of Directors. We look forward to good and constructive relations with BLSG.

Thank you very much.
Alyson

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