



Review of WAA Strategic Plan Goals 1 and 2

If you are like me, you are probably starting to wonder what happened to your summer! Things that you planned to get to have been completely “reprioritized,” passed over so many times that they are long-forgotten ideas, or will make great additions to the “If a guy had the time...” discussions. And that’s just in our professional lives.

If you recall from my summer message the WAA Board of Directors has approved the Strategic Plan for the 2010-2014 time frame. The plan highlights four main goals that the board feels are most critical to achieve in the next 4-5 years. I am using my messages to you, the members, to highlight the main points of these four goals so that you may be better informed to approve the plan at our business meeting at the 2012 annual conference. I will highlight goals 1 & 2 in this message.

Goal 1 – Improve the Organizational Structure of the WAA

Exciting, I know. Everyone involved in the plan process agreed that before the WAA can grow and move forward, it is essential that our organization have more structure and a better understanding of the roles and responsibilities of the board members. The planning committee and the board took a long hard look at themselves and realized that, as volunteer groups go, we have great volunteers who step up and do a good job, but when it’s time to pass the torch, that transition could be much smoother.

That being said, the board has identified the need to create a Governance Committee. In short, this committee will be charged with keeping the board of directors focused and on task to achieve the goals and milestones to be outlined ahead. We plan to have this governance committee in place by the end of 2011.

Currently all committees are in the process of creating Policy and Procedure documents. These documents will allow future board and committee members to

know the what, when, why and how of their responsibilities. It will further define the structure of the committee and be a vital tool to aid in consistency of the committee as the members change over time. Other actions the board will take on include implementing exit interviews for board members as they complete their terms. The information from these interviews along with the new policy and procedures will allow for the creation of a new board member orientation. All of this is to be a concerted effort to make new and potential board members comfortable with what they are taking on and to promote a smooth transition from outgoing chairperson to the incoming chairperson.

Once the organizational structure is improved, the board of directors will feel comfortable in pursuing the discussion of paid staff for the WAA. Having paid staff could alleviate the time requirements on some of the current volunteer roles of the board members. This, in turn, may make member involvement more appealing to some, which could make the organization even stronger.

Goal 2 – Promote the Value of Membership

The question that I hope all of you ask yourself and can answer is, “What do I get out of being a member of the WAA?” We want the WAA to be your go-to resource to promote the profession of urban forestry and arboriculture in Wisconsin. My question to you is, “Does the WAA provide you with the tools to promote the profession of urban forestry and arboriculture?”

The WAA board strives to do this and tries get your feedback through the membership surveys. In 2009, we conducted an online survey of you, the member. The board then took the survey results and used them in their respective areas. At the 2010 annual conference, the format of the business meeting changed to a focus group format. The topics discussed in those focus groups came from the information

provided in the survey. If the board felt they needed more clarification on something or had a new idea, we pitched it to you in the focus groups. This business meeting format was used in 2011 and will be done again in 2012 following a new membership survey to be completed this fall and winter. These are your opportunities to express your feelings on how the WAA can benefit you and your career.

The board has also identified the need to have a new member orientation. In the next five years, new members will be welcomed and more informed about the WAA and the many opportunities it can provide its members. This effort is part of a plan to retain more members and get them involved in the organization.

Currently, board members have been working on other member benefits. You may have noticed the WAA use of social media like Facebook; we are in the early stages of creating a WAA Safety Committee that will represent all facets of our membership, working to address safety issues relevant to your daily work. The number of CEU opportunities have also increased and have been diversified to allow you to keep current with the growing number of ISA certifications available.

We are halfway there. In my next message I will cover Goals 3 and 4, along with printing the strategic plan for your review. I hope you all have a safe and productive fall season. Don’t forget to mark your calendars for the WAA fall seminar, October 20, in Oconomowoc. Look for more details on the WAA website and in email blasts.

Brian Pelot, WAA President

