TPE BOARD OF DIRECTORS
STRATEGIC PLANNING RETREAT

Saturday, September 29, 2007
Epic Systems Facility
Verona, Wisconsin

ACTION ITEMS IN BLUE

Attendees

Directors: Rob Baller, Joel Dunnette, Rich Henderson, Kathy Henderson, Evanne Hunt, Jack Kussmaul, Victoria Oberle, Nick Faessler, Jim Rachuy

Visitors: Jessica Bolwahn, Jamie Edwards, Bonnie Maffitt, Earl Mihlbauer, Jim O'Brien, Jim Sime, Amy Staffen, Jon Traver, Claudia Vlisides, Susan Weigel

Strategic planning determines where an organization is going over the next year or more, how it's going to get there and how it'll know if it got there or not. Appreciative inquiry (AI) is based on the assertion that "problems" are often the result of our own perspectives and perceptions of phenomena; for example, if we look at a certain priority as a "problem," then we tend to constrain our ability to effectively address the priority and to continue to develop in our lives and work.

In this meeting, we focused on what drew us to TPE, what worked best for TPE in the past, where our strengths lie, and what we want for the future.

PART I: THE INTERVIEW

Purpose: To elicit inspirational stories of TPE
Guidelines: Group breaks into pairs, interview each other. Interview questions included:

- What attracted you to TPE initially?
- What is the high point of your TPE experience?
- What aspects of TPE do you value the most?
- What are the most important events, trends and developments affecting TPE?
- What are three core values that you would like to see TPE carry into the future?
- What three wishes would you make to heighten the overall vitality of TPE?

PART II: SHARING

Purpose: To develop of shared understanding of the "positive core of strengths" that gives life and vitality to TPE.
Guidelines: Pairs from Part I were joined with two other pairs to prepare a short presentation that includes a story from the interviews that powerfully illustrates the "positive core" of TPE and a list of the 3-5 most important elements of TPE's positive core of strengths.

PART III: VISION OF THE FUTURE TPE

Purpose: From the presentations in Part II, identify core strengths that are central to the mission and purpose of TPE that must be sustained and nurtured as TPE moves into the future.

PART IV: ENVISIONING THE FUTURE OF TPE
Purpose: As a group, create a vision of an ideal TPE for the year 2020.

A general vision was promoted where Central TPE would work for the Chapters in building their capacity to implement the TPE mission. Central would provide services, resources, and guidance to Chapters. Each Chapter implements the TPE mission by selecting goals and objectives that best fit their unique strengths and resources.

Roles of Central TPE Board and Chapters

Central
Fundraising (design and share strategies with Chapters)
Administration
Grants (design and share strategies with Chapters)
Services (provide services to Chapters)
Education (workshops, videos, etc.)
Reduce duplicated efforts (foster networking between Chapters to share ideas; this should be done through a central committee)

Chapters
Chapter should be small geographically
Stewardship
No size restriction to remnants
Local outreach
Protection
Education

Other visions of TPE in the future:

- A cultural change where TPE is recognized as easily as The Red Cross (Rob)
- Institutionalization of prairie knowledge throughout every level of society (race, socio-economic group, etc.) (Amy)
- 50% of population knows about prairies (Joel)
- Protection of prairies through legislation (Bonnie); through a tax write-off (Rich)
- Huge endowment for Central and for each parcel owned/managed by TPE (Jack)
- Automated services
    - online registration (Victoria)
    - blog, listserv (Jim Sime)
    - Wikipedia (Jim Rachuy)
    - Media kit, Speakers Bureau (Amy)
    - Important that all above ideas carefully controlled by a moderator

- Have an army of site assessors (Jamie)
    - Rich H. suggests that if no one is available, tell landowners who request an assessor to go on a TPE field trip to learn the plants and mgmt themselves
    - Remind field trip leaders that their trips provide educational opportunities for neophytes as well as for old hacks
    - Need to train field trip leaders?
- Push for Stewardship Fund or other like opportunities (*e.g.*, federal Conservation Fund) (Jim Sime, Jim Rachuy, Bonnie Maffitt)
- Integrated Central and Chapter (Jim Rachuy)
- Intern program at all secondary campuses (Jim Sime)
- Partner with DOT to protect roadside listed species (be vigilant in demanding implementation of policy stating that DOT will inform conservation groups like TPE when their management actions may negatively affect roadside listed species) (Jim Sime)
- Archive of all newsletters available electronically (Jim Sime)
- Rich Henderson's vision:
    - 10,000 members
    - 30,000 volunteer hours per year
    - work with 500 landowners
    - 5,000 acres protected
    - complete remnant database
- Farmland preservation integral to our mission, work with farmers to develop compatible agricultural practices, build partnerships with them (Amy)

Tangential Discussion on Fundraising

- *Chapters want guidance, support, ideas for local events*
- *Insufficient communication of fundraising goals from committee to chapters*
- *Committee challenge – pay for Executive Director, develop broad-scale ideas that can be done by all chapters across-the-board (at the direction of Renae)*

PART V: IDENTIFYING HIGH-LEVERAGE STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

Purpose: To build the future you want for TPE

Guidelines: Create a list of high-leverage strategic priorities for TPE, those with the most potential to quickly actualize the visions set forth in Part IV above.

- Train site consultants, create a database, information source
- Train field trip leaders, possibly at annual conference
- Improve communication channels
    - Communications (esp. emails) from Central need to go to all officers for each chapter?
    - Alternatives:
        - Elect Chapter Presidents who are effective at organizing their Board members and channeling information from Central to them.
        - Hire Admin. Assistant to ensure global and effective communications
    - Have large files posted on password-secure website instead of as attachments to emails, which can be a great burden to those with dial-up Internet connections and/or slow servers
- Remnant database
- Outreach to children and students
- Publicize events (news releases, etc.). Hire/recruit Publicity Rep?
- Hire staff
    - Step One: Administrative Assistant
    - Strategic planning necessary to secure long-term funding
    - Once funding is secure, hire an Executive Director
    - Hire a Development Director
        - Develop contract where terms specify contacting 100 businesses and garnering a minimum of $100,000 in first 300 days. (Earl)
- Develop local membership welcome packet based on standardized organizational template produced by Central
- Emails or postcards should be sent out by Chapter leaders to their local membership on a regular basis to inform them of opportunities and important information
- Develop Standard Operating Procedures? (Amy) Rich H. informs group that they are working on developing standardized policies on a piecemeal basis, as they find they have the time and resources.
- Promote legislation to support our mission. Utilize/foster our connections with umbrella groups like Gathering Waters.
- Set fundraising goals for endowments

Tangential Discussion on Conference and Banquet

- *Evanne asked whether it should be held at the same location central to all members every year. This would reduce workload in terms of fundraising, securing venue and catering, etc.*
- *Many indicated that they prefer that it moves around to the different Chapter areas, as it serves as one of their greatest membership drives. Fear that many won't go to a conference and banquet that's a long distance. Also provides opportunities for Chapters to showcase their own local sites and initiatives.*
- *Jamie feels that conference handbook is well-done, and that planners just need to follow and implement the guidelines (one important guideline that is not consistently implemented is getting donors to support next year's conference in addition to current year's event). Amy suggests adding Chapter-specific tips to handbook.*
- *Suggestion to create a central conference planning committee that provides continuity and skilled guidance to local Chapters. Central committee could work with local conference planners in developing a unique event in a new location each year.*

Tangential Discussion on Fundraising Ideas
(Bonnie and other reps of Fundraising and Endowment Committee support these ideas, but point out that they all seem to be events that would occur locally, and that Renae had directed them to set fundraising goals and objectives that would yield benefits to the organization as a whole. The need for communication of ideas between F & E Committee and Chapters underscored.)

- *Car donation (TPE would sell, keep proceeds, whatever value is received is amount that donor can deduct from their taxes)*
- *Car raffle*
- *Rent movie theater, show prairie movies*
- *Box car derby*
- *Patent, market and sell Parsnip Predator*
- *Sell more TPE merchandise (hats, t-shirts, sweatshirts, note cards, calendars, Nomex)*
- *Barn dance and concert*
- *Bike ride, run*
- *Work party coupons*
- *Quilt*
- *Sell ecological services*
- *Bequests/planned giving*
- *Wholesale marketing of prairie seed (2/3 of retail)*
- *Retail marketing of prairie seed on limited basis (to other environmental organizations for specific projects)*
- *Seek McKnight/MacCarthur Foundation grant to fund administrative consultation for other similar organizations*

Tangential Discussion on Selling Restrictions

- *Claudia and Jim Rachuy clarified that consulting for money is allowed, but site stewardship for pay would require liability insurance which TPE currently does not have*
- *Jamie states that they have been loaning out their burn equipment, and feel secure in doing so since they have lessor sign a liability waiver. They do not require payment, but they suggest a donation. Claudia feels that this is still risky.*
- ❑ *Claudia will compose and send out to all Chapter board members a summary of pertinent IRS rules. Note: Are there any state rules that apply, or only federal?*
- ❑ *Any Board members who have a liability waiver should share with Evanne. These should be reviewed by lawyer, modified if necessary, and shared with all Chapter leaders.*