

BRAW BOARD MEETING MINUTES
December 6, 2025
Waunakee Public Library & Online

Officers/Directors Present: Steve Sample, Gene Kroupa, David Lucey, Patrick Ready, Mike Crawford, Steve Fallon, Gail Smith, Amy Harriman, Sharon Johnson, Dan Schroeder, and Christine McDaniel.

Others Present: Val Van Winkle

1. **Call to Order.** The meeting was called to order by President Steve Sample at 9:19 a.m.
2. **Roll Call.** Roll call was taken, and we had a quorum.
3. **Changes to the Agenda.** None.
4. **Minutes.** Minutes of September 20, 2025, Board Meeting were unanimously approved on a motion made by Dave Lucey and seconded by Patrick Ready.
5. **Officers' Reports.** The following officers' reports were given:
 - a. **President's Report & Communications.** President Steve Sample reported:
 - i. BRAW received a request for 50 bluebird box tags and have an adequate number at this point to accommodate. There was discussion about whether the boxes are in public or entirely on private property and potentially making a statement that the tags should be used on public property or public facing property. No action was taken.
 - ii. Need to contemplate succession planning for the Treasurer and President positions, along with the PR position. Would like everyone to prepare a short brief on their position to facilitate the transition.
 - iii. President Sample would like the Board Members to consider expanding their efforts for the Organization so that the efforts do not fall on a select few individuals.
 - b. **Vice-President's Report.** Vice-President Branwell was not in attendance and did not provide a report.
 - c. **Treasurer's Report.** President Sample brought forth the 2026 Budget. Motion was made to approve budget by Dave Lucey and was seconded by Gail Smith. Motion was unanimously approved.

6. Committee Reports.

- a. **2026 Committees & Members.** The Board discussed the proposed Committee and Member list and whether it would be better to consolidate some of the committees (i.e. nest box and trail building committees). This listing was tabled and no action was taken.
- b. **Membership.** Val Van Winkle reported that membership is the highest it has ever been! There are 987 members in BRAW. Discussion was made regarding providing free membership for the 1000 member, which will likely occur at the Garden Expo. Separately, membership letters are going out, and members have been responding well. Lastly, Valarie Van Winkle and Joanie Haugen sent out a Giving Tuesday request which brought in about \$800, which will go towards nesting boxes.
- c. **Finance.** Joanie Haugen was unable to attend the meeting, but she had provided updated financials for our review that were approved as part of the Treasurer's Report. BRAW's financials are up about 60% over last year, which provides a safety net for the organization. Motion to approve filing for audit was made by Patrick Ready, seconded by Christine McDaniels. Motion was unanimously approved.
- d. **Newsletter/Brochures.** Pat Ready reported that the winter issue of the *Wisconsin Bluebird* was printed and mailed to members. Pat Ready shared that the informational packet is running low, so we will need to order another 300 or 500 copies depending on cost savings of a larger order. Ready shared that they will be printed and ready for the Garden Expo.
- e. **Research.** Dave Lucey reported that he continues to facilitate research on installation of a plastic skirt along the front roof line of the bluebird boxes in order to deter House Sparrows. Lucey is reaching out to Ripon College to collaborate on the research. The Board discussed its personal experience with skirting and found it less successful but that we likely need to engineer a stronger plastic skirting.
- f. **Website.** Webmaster Andy Garcia-Rivera was unable to attend the Meeting. Garcia-Rivera is having difficulties with the new HP computer.
- g. **Technology.** Mike Crawford reported that we purchased Wi-Fi hot spot to process square transactions at Convention and the Garden Expo. Regarding the Garden Expo, Crawford said he would be sharing the convention sign-up schedule the first week of January for Board members to staff the table at the Expo, and that he will open up the schedule the second week of January for all members to attend and staff the table. President Sample is signed up to teach two BRAW seminars at the Expo.
- h. **Historian.** Gail Smith did not have anything to report. Gene Kroupa shared that he will be transferring his historical minutes to Amy Harriman and will share the entirety of his BRAW electronic and print files with Historian Gail Smith.

- i. **County Contacts.** Gene Birr was not able to attend the meeting, but provided a report in the Winter Issue of WB. The Board discussed managing staffing and speech requests, and whether the County Contacts could step into these roles. In order to do so, the Board would like to provide a sample/form presentation for Contacts to use at speeches.
- j. **Public Relations.** Gene Kroupa reported that:
 - i. He has focused on coverage of the 2025 awards recipients, first in local newspapers and then conservation organization newsletters, and we have had wonderful success. This is great news for our recipients and for the organization's public relations.
 - ii. The winter issue of the NABS Bluebird Newsletter will have a couple of BRAW articles in it, including "more lessons learned from the DALC program."
 - iii. He wrote an article on BRAW's research questions, which can be used for NABS grant application purposes that will appear in the same issue.
 - iv. He also wrote an article for the Driftless Area Land Conservancy's E-Newsletter about nesting success in BRAW nest boxes, and thanked Steve Fallon for providing data in order to do so.
 - v. Lastly, Steve Fallon and he are working on an article for the Wisconsin Society for Ornithology's newsletter on this year's fledging data results.
- h. **Data.** Steve Fallon reported that we expect additional data submissions on fledglings, but the number of submissions were also down by about 5%. Of the 340 submissions, there were 16,323 Bluebird fledges. This is 7.4% lower for Bluebirds, 19% lower for Tree Swallows, and 6% higher for Wrens. The Board discussed whether the lower number of insects are impacting the fledglings.
- i. **Trail Building Committee Charter.** Chairperson Tom Moser was not able to attend the meeting. Looking forward to Moser's efforts in this Committee. Discussed the Nest in Peace program and its success.

7. **Old Business**

- a. **2026 Strategic and Marketing Plans.** Board discussed the 2026 Strategic and Marketing Plans. Motion to approve the Strategic Marketing Plan was made by Davey Lucey and seconded by Gail Smith. The motion was approved unanimously.
- b. **Convention Evaluation.** Board discussed the results. Andy Garcia-Rivera posted the results on website. Discussed moving the Convention to a different location but the difficulty with that. Discussion was tabled and will be addressed at the March meeting.

8. **New Business**

- a. **Emeritus Status of Board.** Today's meeting is the last Board meeting for Dan Schroeder and Gene Kroupa. Each will continue in an Emeritus Status. The Board discussed providing publicity for their contributions on the website and providing such an honor based upon a certain length of time. Kroupa provided a heartfelt acknowledgement to BRAW, and the impact it has had on his life in retirement. Kroupa is looking forward to completing his book.
 - b. **Director Terms Ending.** The terms for Brad Branwell, Steve Sample, Mike Crawford, and Steve Fallon end as of December 31, 2025. Each would like to continue to serve in their existing capacity until December 31, 2028. Motion to approve the slate of directors was made by Amy Harriman, seconded by Mike Crawford, and unanimously approved.
 - c. **Treasurer Replacement.** The Board is looking for a replacement Treasurer. Christine McDaniels was nominated. Motion to approve Christine McDaniels as the Treasurer was made by Dave Lucey, and seconded by Gail Smith, which was unanimously approved.
 - d. **2026 Meeting Dates Approval.** President Sample proposed the following dates for next year's meetings: March 07, June 06, September 19, December 05. Motion to approve the slate of directors by Amy Harriman, seconded by Sharon Johnson, and unanimously approved. Motion was made by Amy Harriman to amend those dates to include a new zoom meeting on August 29 to prepare for Convention and move the September meeting date to September 26 due to Convention, which was seconded by Sharon Johnson. The Motion was unanimously approved. The 2026 meeting dates will be: March 07, June 06, August 29, September 26, and December 05. Mike Crawford will confirm these dates with the Waunakee Library.
9. **Next Meeting.** The next regularly scheduled board meeting will be held Saturday, March 7, 2026, at the Waunakee Public Library with a start time of 9:15 a.m.
10. **Adjournment.** The board unanimously approved a motion by Patrick Ready and seconded by Mike Crawford to adjourn at 11:45 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by,

Amy Harriman
Acting Secretary