

SOCIETY OF GRASSLANDS NATURALISTS
Minutes of Board Meeting-December 6, 2016
Host- Dee and Hugh Armstrong.

Present: Hugh Armstrong (Chair), Betty Rainville (Secretary), Eileen Cowtan, Ian Turner, Anne Bernhardt, Gary Martin.
Guest: John Slater. Absent: Dave McKenzie, Angela Turner.

1. Call to Order: 6:30 pm
2. Review of GN Board Minutes from November 1, 2016. One correction to the Nov. 1st minutes was made in item 5. Reports; d.5 should read, "Chief Interpreter's reports on current projects, event schedule, grants and budget received and accepted. Draft Budget already submitted to Budget Committee; see 4.b. above." In which the word "approved" in the draft should be changed to "accepted". Minutes were accepted. Motion CARRIED.
3. Additions to Agenda:
 - a. **BioBlitz 150.** John noted Martha Munz Gue received an email from SEAWA suggesting that GN might wish to co-sponsor with SEAWA or the Archeological Association. Members of the Issues Committee, The MHIP Operations Committee, birders, and other key people will meet in January to discuss this and make recommendations to the GN Board regarding conducting special programs in 2017. Watch The Chronicle for announcements or go to <http://bioblitz.ca/default.aspx> for information on BioBlitz 150.
 - b. **World Water Display in March.** Hugh will call Jessica Plattner (MH College) or contact Cathy Linowski regarding World Water Day on March 22. Jessica is interested in working with GN for this event and is also trying to organize a Council of Canadian Chapter in Medicine Hat.
 - c. **Potential Draft of MOU (Memorandum of Understanding) between Praxis and SEAWA.** Martha noted in an email that Marilou Montemayor (SEAWA ED) asked if Praxis and GN would consider formalizing a partnership with SEAWA. The MOU was drawn up by Cathy Linowski and sets the terms by which SEAWA and PRAXIS will collaborate in their delivery of programs to increase awareness of the South Saskatchewan Watershed. John suggested discussing this topic after the January meeting. See 3.a.
 - d. **Canadian Badlands/GN Attendance at Annual Meeting.** The 7th Annual Tourism Development Conference and AGM will be held March 15 – 17 in Brooks. Keynote speakers are Jon Montgomery, Mark Sutherland, Doug Griffiths, and Tom Jackson. Organizers would like a GN Bird Trails presentation. Hugh will ask Rob Gardner or Marty Drut if they would speak. Two people are also needed at a GN display table.
4. Action Items:
 - a. **December Bird Count and Pot Luck.** The Bird count will be held during the day on December 18 followed by a Potluck at 5:30 pm. at the Police Point Park Nature Centre. Everyone is welcome.
 - b. **GN Issues sub-committee to formulate input to City Environmental Policy.** 1) The Hamptons area is a starting point for GN to provide input. Marty, Martha, Hugh, Tina, John and others are on a subcommittee to help strengthen the environmental aspects of the plan.
2) Seven Persons Creek: John noted the weirs are no longer in the creek. At the end of October, the concrete and Rock weirs were taken out and fencing was put up in the area. In the spring, a large piece of pipe is to be used to line the creek along with large sandbags while work is done to repair the sides of the creek. John has sent pertinent information to GN Board members. Dave McKenzie will contact Evan Laturas, Environmental Utilities Department for more information. Rob will meet at John's house next Monday at 9:30 am to discuss How to Restore Riparian Areas on Creeks. Issues Committee members invited.
 - c. **Location of March AGM** will be at Police Point Park Interpretive Centre on March 28th.
 - d. **Outstanding Bills to Eileen** before the year end. Committee heads have been informed of this.
5. Reports:
 - a. **Treasurer's Report:** Eileen reported a balance of \$23,375.36.
 - b. **Membership:** Eileen said membership is 84 with a breakdown of 38 Individuals and 46 Families.
 - c. **Correspondence:** None at present.
 - d. **MHIP Operations Committee:** John reported that the Hay Ride was a success with about 1000 people taking part. The Medicine Hat News posted a photo of the event. John mentioned that Lisa McMow is the new Bookkeeper. On December 18 a new StoreyWalk "The Night Before Christmas" by Barbara Reid, opens at 3:00 pm. Photographers of a Feather, exhibit by local photographers, is on display at the Nature Centre until December 30.

Manyberries Christmas Bird Count takes place December 28. Call Rob Gardner at 403-527-2052 for information.

Young Artists Inspired by Nature Art Show runs from January 3 to 29. Reception will be held at the Nature Centre on January 11, 7:30 pm.

- e. **Issues Committee:**
1. John said that he along with Hugh, Martha, and Tina met last Thursday morning with City Planning and Development Services regarding the Hamptons Area. Robert Sissons and Ian Hakes were two of the staff present. The GN group would like to see the storm water retention ponds be in a natural state like those in the Southlands area rather than being manicured.
 2. Ranchlands Project 2017: John and Hugh met with Dave Curtis of LABS (Lands and Business Support) last Thursday morning. A contractor has been hired to assess all LABS managed properties in the City including Ranchlands. John said the Baby's Breath project is therefore on hold for now.
 3. Wildflower Brochure and Budget: This group met 2 times in the last month. The Horticultural Society donated \$500 toward the printing costs of the brochure. An application for an additional donation of \$1000 has also been made to The Alberta Native Plant Council. GN should know by March 2017 whether this has been approved by ANPC. The list of wildflowers has been finalized and the group is now gathering pictures from Dwayne and other contributors.
- f. **Budget Committee: Review and Approval of the 2016 and 2017 GN Budgets:** The Budget Committee met November 30 to provide an update to the 2016 budget expenses and income and to prepare the 2017 GN Budget. Hugh passed on some highlights from Paul Thibault:
- The 2017 budget projects \$16,102 in income, \$19,247 in expenses with a resulting \$3,145 deficit. Once again, GN is trying to use some of the cash accumulated over recent years to support existing and new activities.
 - Some of the income is subject to successful grant applications by the Fundraising Committee. As a result, expenses for some committees are contingent on these grant applications.
 - Expected expenses for the Chronicle have been increased because of plans to supply colour copies to GN members without internet access, and external organizations such as MH Public Library. Also 8 colour copies and 10 black and white copies will be distributed by the Nature Centre.
- Motion for approval of 2016 and 2017 GN budgets. CARRIED.
- Review and Acceptance of the 2016 and 2017 MHIP Budgets:** Hugh passed on highlights from Paul:
- The MHIP budget update for Jan.1 to October 31, 2016, shows \$204,341.08 in income, \$208,694.50 in expenses with a resulting net loss of \$4,353.42. Depending on additional expenses and income, MHIP may show a more balanced budget or, possibly an actual profit at the end of the year.
 - Police checks will be needed by volunteers. These will be covered by Volunteer grants and Lisa Bey will look after the paperwork. A message will be put in The Chronicle.
 - The GN Board contribution for 2016 was \$17,491.00, which exceeds the budgeted \$15,000.00.
- Motion to accept the MHIP Budget for 2016 and 2017 Budgets. CARRIED.
- g. **Governance Committee:** Hugh passed on a highlight from Paul:
- Mileage expenses for the Indoor program have been increased from that requested due to intended increase in the GN Club mileage rate from \$0.15km to \$0.25km as approved at the Governance Committee meeting on November 30th. This mileage rate applies to all GN activities except for the Field Trips Committee and MHIP. A new P&P will be developed for travel expenses at the next Governance Committee meeting on May 4, 2017. The P&P will then be submitted to the Board for approval.
 - There is still question about Legal Issues as to if and how GN is protected by the current Insurance policy. Further discussion at the next Governance Committee meeting is planned.
- h. **Indoor Committee:** Dave McKenzie has scheduled Joan Armour to speak on Hay Bale Gardening at the next General Meeting on January 24.
- i. **Fund Raising Committee:** Hugh reported that an application to Walmart for a donation of \$1000 toward Bird Tales needs to be submitted by December 15. The Committee is waiting to hear from the Alberta Native Plant Council about a \$1000 grant to be put toward the Wildflowers Brochure.
- j. **Field Trip Updates:** John said that he will put a list of the 2016 neighbourhood walks, field trips, MHIP events and other activities in the December Chronicle. A 2017 Field Trip Schedule will be made up in the New Year.
- k. **Communications Committee:** Ian said the next project of making a banner for promotional purposes will start in the New Year. One Board member noted it would be beneficial to have a banner ready for the Canadian Badlands Annual Meeting in March.
- l. **Birding Trails Project Update: Brochure and Budget:** Hugh/John. Rack cards will be available for the Southeastern Alberta Trail Guide project using \$500.00 seed funding that is being rolled from 2016 into 2017. In the GN Club 2017 Budget documents, Paul noted the main purpose of the rack cards is to inform the general public of the availability of the digital version of the trail guide on the GN Club website. The rack cards are ready to be printed and will be placed at the MH Public Library, the Canadian Badlands Association, the Visitor Centre and other tourist outlets.
- m. **Bird Tales Update:** Hugh reported that the Bird Tales program at Masterpiece Retirement has been put on hold due to personnel changes, health concerns from the bird-droppings under the feeders in the courtyard, and lack of staffing.

The Meadow Ridge program is progressing well. Incidentally, AgeCare Valleyview Retirement and South Country Village Retirement have expressed an interest in starting the Bird Tales program. However, there are not enough volunteers to make this possible at this time.

6. Other Business:

a. **Webcam Project and Update:** Hugh noted that this project is on hold for now, since the eagles are building a new nest in the prime Blue Heron nesting area. The arrival of spring may see the Herons changing their nesting site, but that is not certain yet. The new webcam project at the Nature Centre bird feeder will cost approximately \$2000.00 in 2017 to purchase a camera and to develop a robotic camera mount that can be operated through the internet for pan and tilt. Casino money will be used to fund this project.

7 Next Board Meeting January 3, 2017 at 7 pm at Betty's home.

8. Meeting Adjourned at 7:58 pm. Thanks to Dee and Hugh for refreshments.