

SOCIETY OF GRASSLANDS NATURALISTS
Minutes of Board Meeting, April 7, 2020
Board Meeting via Skype.

Present via Skype: Hugh Armstrong (Chair), Betty Rainville (Secretary), Phil Horch (via phone), Eileen Cowtan, Ian and Angela Turner, Linda Fisher.

1. Call to Order: 1:28 pm
2. Review and Adoption of GN Board Minutes from March 3, 2020. **CARRIED.**
3. Additions to the Agenda:
 - a. **The Present COVID-19 Pandemic:** On March 15, 2020 Hugh confirmed that the March 24, 2020 **AGM was postponed** after a deciding vote from the GN Board. **No GM's will be planned until further notice** due to the continued threat of COVID-19 virus. Eileen emailed/or phoned this notice to all GN Members, and Paul Thibault posted this on the GN website.
Hugh noted the GN Board will carry on with the same members until an AGM is held.
He said voting on motions will be done electronically during the current situation.
 - b. **Financing for the Interpretive Program during COVID-19:** Hugh reported that Corlaine indicated the IP income would be reduced with no programs being carried out and the Nature Centre being closed to the public.
Hugh reported the 2 part time staff members are laid off, but may qualify for a certain amount of Federal assistance.
The 4 year round staff - Marty, Justine, Alicia and Corlaine – are continuing to work with a slight reduction of hours. A carry over of funds from last year ensures enough money to keep these year round staff employed.
Corlaine indicated she will have a report in the Chronicle regarding online programs being developed, such as School Programs to be distributed through various media, as well as health related programming.
Corlaine will get the changed version of the budget, which takes into account a drop of \$60,000.00 in income over the rest of the year, to the MHIP Operations Committee for review.
 - c. **New Members on Issues Committee:** Hugh noted that the Board appoints Members to various committees.* Hugh will check with Martha to find the names and contact information of the new interested members, and appointments will be made electronically.(See Item 6.e below).
 - d. **GN History Collection for New Members:** At the last Board meeting, Martha questioned how new members would have access to GN history.* She will search online for possible grants offered to groups for such historical research.
Eileen reported that she sent September and October 2015 Sagebrush Chronicles to new members Jocelyn, Brandy, and Paula. These two issues contained a History of Grasslands Naturalists compiled and written by Eileen Cowtan with assistance from Dennis Baresco and Rob Gardner.
Dennis had been reviewing GN paperwork, files, and documentation until his work was interrupted by COVID-19 restrictions.
Once these restrictions are lifted, Phil Horch will take further material to Dennis.
 - e. **Casino:** Hugh reported the Copper Coulee Casino is closed at this time so, we will need to wait for all other fund raising groups that are booked ahead of us. Hugh said that Dave McKenzie suggested summer 2021 may be the first available opening for GN.
Eileen spoke briefly about the year-end report to the Casino.
 - f. **Annual Spring Bird Count:** This event usually takes place about six weeks from now, around May 24th according to Marty Drut, who is in charge of assigning areas to interested birders. It is possible that members **may** be able to send in individual counts, with the high likelihood of no potluck supper in the evening. Marty will continue to assess the situation with respect to physical distancing, number of people in the group, and other details and keep GN members informed of the decision before the bird count.
 - g. **Provincial Private Sale of Public Land:** Linda Fisher brought up the recent sale of land east of Taber which was auctioned off this March, despite recent promises by the Alberta Government that no Crown land would be put up for sale. Hugh has sent a letter from GN to the Premier and certain members of the Provincial Government opposing the sale of all Crown native grasslands. This correspondence was coordinated with other conservation groups such as AWA, CPAWS, Nature Alberta and more. There will be further information contained in the Issues Committee Report in the April 2020 Sagebrush Chronicle. A big thanks to Gerry Ehler and the Issues Committee for all of their work.
4. Action Items
 - a. **City and GN Litter Blitz Cancelled:** Angela reported that she called Keziah Lesko-Gosselin, at Parks and Recreation, and was told the April 18 City Litter Blitz is cancelled.
However, GN members could still pick up garbage in their own neighbourhood. Hugh suggested members could stay close to their own homes, and choose a start time which is suitable to them.

- b. **Presentation of GN Lifetime Membership:** Corlaine sent a suggestion that the lifetime membership be presented to Jan Scott at the June potluck. Another choice would be a presentation in absentia.
Moved that the GN Lifetime Membership be presented to Jan Scott at the June 2020 GN picnic, or whenever it is possible. **CARRIED.**
- c. **Environmental Master Plan:** *Phil Horch will confirm that the Plan was signed and sent to the City.
- d. **Special Meeting to Study and Discuss PIPA:** It was decided that the Board will meet via Skype at 1:30 pm on Wednesday, April 15 to discuss the PIPA workbook. Hugh requested that the Board review the workbook before the meeting. *Betty will send Phil a brief review of PIPA discussions as taken from GN Minutes over the past few years.
- e. **Co-Treasurer Position Discussion:** Angela has accepted the position of Co-Treasurer with Eileen for 1 year, for the management of Casino, and GN books. Eileen will look at hiring someone for financial management of the Interpretive Program books.
Moved that GN approach David Gue about the possibility of providing three-user package QuickBooks, 2020 Software. **CARRIED.**

5. Reports:

- a. **Treasurer's Report:** Eileen reported the Casino Chequing Account Balance as of April 6 is \$7410.51. The "Club" Savings Accounts stands at \$16,554.86 as of April 5, 2020 and the chequing Account Balance is \$3,895.73. Common Shares are \$1.35, bringing Total Current Assets to \$20,451.94. Other assets of GST receivable and prepaid insurance expense bring Total Assets to \$21,362.28.
Eileen also presented a GN Profit & Loss sheet for January through March 2020, which showed a total income of \$1,245.08, with a Net Income after expenses of \$534.82.
- b. **Membership:** Eileen reported the membership at approximately 78, but it is in a state of flux as it was last month.
- c. **Correspondence:** Eileen noted she received some information about an upcoming Casino training presentation as well as correspondence from the company Benevity. Eileen will register with this Calgary-based company which distributes donations to charitable organizations.
- d. **Operations Committee MHIP Report:** Hugh noted there is no report.
The Committee is doing an interim budget currently.
- e. **Issues Committee:** A complete Issues Committee Report by Gerry Ehlert will be posted in the April 2020 issue of The Chronicle.
- f. **Indoor Committee:** All speakers for March, April and May 2020 are postponed because of COVID-19 restrictions on size of gatherings and physical distancing.
Linda reported that Brian Keating has been rebooked for his presentation at the **Esplanade to Monday, October 5, 2020**. All previous tickets purchased for this presentation will be honored.
*Linda will check with Corlaine to see if the Nature Centre is available for a Brain Keating presentation Sunday, October 4, 2020.
- g. **Fund Raising Committee:** Hugh noted that Martha is looking into grants for assistance with compiling GN History.
- h. **Field Trip Committee:** *See April Chronicle for suggestions on enjoying nature despite the current COVID crisis.
After discussion regarding COVID regulations, and GN liability issues, the Board made the following motion.
Moved that all Grasslands Naturalists sponsored Field Trips be cancelled until further notice. **CARRIED.**
- i. **Communications Committee:** No report.
*Eileen will contact Milt about the number of copies of The Chronicle to be mailed out.
The Chronicle will not be delivered to the Nature Centre this month, Eileen noted.
- j. **Birding Trails:** Phil reported that the group has been inactive this month.
The Board discussed the absence of Birding Trail information in the recent Report on S.E. Alberta 2020.
*Phil will contact Jace Anderson, Executive Director, Tourism Medicine Hat, regarding coverage of the Birding Trails Guide in the 2021 Report for Medicine Hat and area.
- k. **Bird Tales:** Hugh reported for Paul and Dee, that no activities are happening presently with this group, because of COVID lock downs in senior facilities.
- l. **Nature Alberta:** Ian and Angela reported they listened to N.A. April 4 meeting via tele-conference.
The Executive Director's position will end March 31, 2020 due to lack of funds. See Ian and Angela's summary of meeting highlights in the April Chronicle.
- m. **Web Cam:** Hugh reported the Web Cam activity is on hold at present.

6. Other Business:

- a. **Palliser Airshed Presentation:** David Gue had agreed to speak at an upcoming General Meeting on the PAS. We will ask David to speak at a future GM once COVID assembly restrictions are lifted.

- b. **GN Response to Ski Hill Trucking Water:** Martha had asked for a Board response to the Issues Committee question of a Ski Hill trucking water to be bottled. *After discussion, it was decided that Hugh would speak to Martha about putting an article in the Chronicle so that members are made aware of the situation, and could respond.
- c. **Have EDDMaps Available for viewing at GM breaks:** *Betty will speak to Nick and/or Tina Regehr about Nick having information available on this topic at General Meetings. We will also ask Nick if he would be willing to put an article in the Chronicle on EDDMaps.
- d. **Echo Dale Survey:** Gerry Ehlert, along with other Issues Committee and GN members, has worked extensively on a Developmental Plan to be submitted to City consultants by April 8, 2020. Moved approval for the Issues Committee to send the Echo Dale Development Plan as a documented reply from Grasslands Naturalists. **CARRIED.**
- e. **Committee Openings:** The Board is pleased to have several new GN members who have volunteered on the Issues Committee. New member Jocelyn Moore has also volunteered to assist in the successful operation of GN. *Hugh will contact Jocelyn this week to inform her of openings that are greatly in need of filling. Thank you to the new volunteers. (See item 3.c.above).
- f. **Next Skype Board Meeting:** Tuesday, May 5, 2020 at 1:30 pm via Skype.
- g. **Adjournment:**3:38 pm