

SOCIETY OF GRASSLANDS NATURALISTS  
Minutes of Grasslands Naturalists Board Meeting, September 1, 2020  
Board Meeting via Skype

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

1. Call to Order: 1:35 pm
2. Review and Adoption of GN Board Minutes from June 2, 2020. **CARRIED.**
3. Additions to the Agenda:
  - a. **Advertising M.H. News in the Chronicle:** After discussion concerning the history of advertising in the Chronicle, and the possible benefits of paid advertising, it was Moved that Grasslands Naturalists do not proceed with the idea of this advertising unless the Medicine Hat News is prepared to pay according to a fee schedule established by GN. **CARRIED.**
  - b. **Nominating Chairman needed for AGM:** Hugh stated that he will ask John Slater if he would agree to act as Nominating Chairman at the upcoming AGM.
  - c. **Board Positions:** Hugh noted that all Board members, with the exception of the President, are allowing their names to stand in the upcoming AGM.  
Thank you to Hugh for his dedication as President over the past nearly five years.  
Phil Horch has kindly indicated that he will accept the position of President.  
Hugh noted that no members have offered to fill the position of Vice President so it will be open for Nominations.
  - d. **Nature Photos to the Chronicle:** Hugh reported that sixty nature photos have already been sent to the Chronicle after Milt invited GN members to send photos depicting nature outings and findings to [milton.spitzer@gmail.com](mailto:milton.spitzer@gmail.com) If members have any outstanding new photographs, Milt encourages sending them to him at the above email address.
4. Action Items
  - a. **Will the AGM be held in September?:** After discussion, the Board decided to call the AGM on September 13<sup>th</sup> at 4 pm at Police Point Park.  
Eileen will send a message to members asking that they bring their own masks, lawn chairs and umbrellas.  
Hugh will check with Corlaine to see if the Nature Centre Patio is free at 4 pm.
  - b. **Date and Location for Lifetime Presentation to Jan Scott:** Hugh will contact Paul with the time of the AGM so that Jan's presentation may be made at the beginning of the AGM, before the Business portion. Valerie Martins will carry out the presentation to Jan. Members will wear masks and observe social distancing.
  - c. **One or Both Letters to the Chronicle about Jan:** Hugh reported that he will check with Paul regarding the two articles to the Chronicle. Linda Fisher suggested the second article could be submitted to the Chronicle to be published another month.
  - d. **Progress in Finding Digitized GM and Board Meeting Minutes from 1990:** Phil noted he has Minutes up to 1998.  
Eileen has many Minutes, from 1985 up to March 2009, which she has laid out on a spreadsheet to the Board and to Dennis Baresco. Betty has Board and GM Minutes from the Secretarial File only starting in 2013. Paul Thibault regularly updates the online Board and General Meeting Minutes, which date back to 2012.
  - e. **Committee Chair Budgets:** Committee Chairs please have their Budgets to Paul before November 1<sup>st</sup>.
5. Reports:
  - a. **Treasurer's Report:** Eileen/Angela. The Board briefly discussed the advantages of having a dedicated computer for doing GN as well as Casino accounts. Eileen noted that the MHIP accounts are on the same Laptop Computer.  
Eileen thanked Ian Wallace and Angela Turner for a recent comprehensive review of the 2019 statements.  
Eileen explained the MHIP Historical Summary Financial Statements from 2016 to July 31, 2020, as well as the MHIP Balance Sheet as at July 31, 2020 showing **Total Assets** of \$246,154.50. The MHIP **Net Income** from Jan1 to July 31, 2020 showed as \$16,336.72.  
Eileen reported the Casino Balance as at August 31, 2020 is \$4153.59.  
The "Club" **Savings** Account stands at \$16,565.82 as of July 31, 2020, and the **Chequing** Account Balance is \$6,712.17.  
Common Shares are \$1.35, bringing Total Current Assets to \$23,279.34. Other Assets of prepaid Insurance expense (\$489.15) bring **Total Assets** to \$23,768.49. The **GN Net Income** for January through August 2020 was \$ 2,068.38.  
Eileen Moved Adoption of the Treasurer's Report. **CARRIED.**
  - b. **Membership:** Eileen reported that 17 people have not renewed despite reminders being sent out and placed in the Chronicle.  
There are 80 members at present, Eileen noted.
  - c. **Correspondence:** Eileen stated there has been no significant correspondence received.
  - d. **Operations MHIP Report:** Hugh stated the Committee will need to meet shortly. He said the group continues to keep fairly active.  
Phone the Nature Centre to place Bird Seed Orders this coming week.

- e. **Issues Committee Report:** See **Addendum** from September 2 at the end of these Minutes.  
The Board discussed two Cleanups suggested by the Issues Committee, and decided on Wednesday September 23 for Ranchlands area, and Wednesday, September 30 for Strathcona Island Park and Shoreline, 9:00 am or later.
  - f. **Indoor Committee:** Linda Fisher reported that Brian Keating's upcoming presentation in September was cancelled. The Esplanade is planning to have Brian present in 2021. He may still be able to present to GN during that visit.  
Linda will call Rob Gardner about the possibility of leading a walk in PP Park after the AGM.
  - g. **Fund Raising Committee:** Hugh noted that fund raising has been very quiet.
  - h. **Field Trip Committee:** Hugh reported that Field Trip activity has been quiet. Many GN and IP events were cancelled due to the pandemic.
  - i. **Communications Committee:** Angela will check with Paul about possible outdated Facebook photos from past years.
  - j. **Birding Trails:** Phil reported that he left 50 copies of the Southeastern Alberta Birding Trails Guide about 2 weeks ago at the MH Tourist Centre to let visitors know about us.  
Phil has a box for delivery to Waterton and other points.  
Eileen reported that the Royal Tyrrell Museum has GN Trail Guides accessible in their store.
  - k. **Bird Tales:** Hugh reported that Bird Tales is not operating right now since volunteers cannot get into the usual Residences because of the pandemic. The new recreation staff does not seem as enthusiastic about presenting the Bird Tales program to residents as previous staff.  
Hugh noted, however, the terrariums in the Seniors' Residence continue to be well looked after by volunteers.
  - l. **Nature Alberta:** Angela reported there will be a Nature Alberta meeting September 12.  
Eileen and Milt will look over the "by email" wording on the Chronicle last page sign-up form.
  - m. **Web Cam Update:** Hugh noted the web speed is not as fast as required. Hugh will check with Paul about the possibility of MH College's interest in the Web Cam.
6. Other Business:
- a. **Future Presentation on Insurance:** Phil reported the invitation to Lisa M. and Mel to speak to the Board on Insurance is on hold. They will speak at a later date.
  - b. **Palliser Air Shed Summary:** Once General Meetings commence again, Betty will contact David Gue about a presentation on PAS.
  - c. **Methanex Corporation Community Advisory Board:** Congratulations to Ian Turner for being accepted for another two year term on CAP.
  - d. **Next Board Meeting:** 1:30 pm, October 6, 2020 via Skype.
  - e. **Adjournment:** 3:00 pm

#### **Addendum to the GN Board Minutes of September 1, 2020.**

##### September 02, 2020 Issues Report to the GN Board

**Members of Committee:** John Slater & Martha Munz Gue (co-chairs), Tina Regehr, Marty Drut, Paula Munroe, Gerry Ehlert, with another two or three people wishing to be kept "in the loop" but without time to work on things (Alicia Lew, Martha Maudsley, John Whidden).

#### Ongoing issues:

**Invasive species, conservation and restoration of native prairie.** Gerry Ehlert is taking the lead and is working with the Parks and Rec Department. This document has been prepared by Gerry and the committee and shared with the Parks Department, and the Planning Department: A Case for Conservation of Native Prairie. Several members have attended the open house sessions about the Municipal Development Plan, the Echo Dale redevelopment plan, and the Dunmore Windfarms. Thank you Gerry for bringing the value of native prairie to the attention of these planners. Gerry also sits on monthly meetings of EURAB. See Gerry's report below for more. Paula expressed concern about the degradation of the Redcliff coulees in recent years. Ideas? Paula plans to connect with the parent council of her son's school. Paula also prepared laminated signs to encourage trail users to stay on the trails. She and her family posted these signs at the entrances to trail. Paula and her sons water weekly 7 young cottonwood trees that she propagated from cuttings and planted at the Connaught Restoration site.

**Water and riparian habitat.** Tina, Paula, and Martha are on SEAWA committees. Would GN like to "adopt" one of the restoration sites for watering and weeding? (Perhaps Connaught Pond because Paula and sons are going there already and could use help). SEAWA has prepared a detailed feedback for the City Municipal Development Plan. The SEAWA Gallery in the Arcade Plaza Downtown on Third Street is currently showing art work relating to water and riparian plants as well as posters showing the riparian restoration experiments. Recommend GN members apply to SEAWA to be on the email list for the SEAWA quarterly newsletter.

**“Nature Deficit”.** Weekly walks are offered to members; a different location each week. Proposing twice weekly: Wednesday Wildflower/Nature Walks, and Friday Forest Walks. Would like to connect with schools to encourage such walks after school led by school councils or Phys Ed folks. Partnering with schools and other groups (Miywasin, Newcomers, Scouts/Guides, etc.) could bring more people outside to enjoy nature. Wildflower brochure and GN website have been useful to ID wildflowers, grasses, butterflies. Sometimes we report invasive weeds on the EDDMapS app. Question: Could these walks be jointly sponsored by GN and IP?

Also, three “en plein air” painting groups are each meeting weekly. (not a GN initiative but celebrated by GN Issues Committee as appreciation of nature is inherent in the activity). SEAWA Gallery displays local art about the watershed.

**Wildflowers and Pollinators.** Awareness actions: Brochure, website, walks, wildflower garden at PPP, Case for Conserving Native Prairie.

**Climate.** Climate Conversations at 4 pm on Fridays have resumed. Currently they are held in Kin Coulee Park near the Kinette Korner Playground. Bring own chair and beverage if desired. Notes are available on Slack for attendees. Rob Gardner has created a local collaborative “Transition” network. Check website for TransitionMedicineHat.ca.

**Garbage.** Suggest two fall garbage pick-ups in September: Ranchlands and Strathcona Island. Also weekly walks always involve picking up garbage (as an aside). Someone always has a bag. Concern about increased garbage from single-use masks and gloves, and return to single-use plastic grocery bags. Ideas?

### Issues that were reported by the public

**Location of new skate board structure** on former native prairie (now half crested wheat). Three people contacted me about this. They also spoke to councillors and others in the city. Perhaps GN could connect with the skateboard association and ask if they would like to partner with GN on Clean up projects along Seven Persons Creek, and along the NECH coulee (upper and lower parts). Gerry recommended not fussing over this issue, while we are enjoying cooperation from Parks with our “Case of Conserving Native Prairie”.

**Weeds, garbage and water on NE side of Allowance Avenue Overpass.** Homeowner contacted city and GN having seen in the Chronicle that we have an issues committee. Flash flooding of her basement happened after rainwater came downhill from two directions and directed by the overpass and swail to her house. Homeowner collected 8 big bags of garbage from nearby her property. City sent someone to weed whack the weeds. Flooding still a potential problem. Follow-up ideas?

**Some Riverside homeowners clearing forest between their home and river.** This recurring problem was brought to our attention by an attendee of the SEAWA tour of riparian restoration projects in July. Suggest mailbox delivery of “Living by Water” Materials. Other ideas?

From Gerry Ehlert :(below)

**Invasive Species** - John and I continued to work with the City in the area of invasive species including monitoring of previous control success and new finds. We found excellent control on Eurasian buckthorn in areas of Connaught Pond (also patch of Elacampane re Innula helenium) and SE Hill. Confirmed an issue with Dalmatian toadflax in center part of SE Hill where to the north and south control was good, as with baby’s breath. Provided city with gps coordinates. John and I found two new invasive species this summer, one is called wild cucumber (Echinocystis lobata - several plants along 7 persons creek just west of Dunmore Rd.) and other is called bouncing-bet (two patches of Saponaria officinale found on upper hills side of Marlborough Coulee). Both plants likely escaped from home garden seed source. Seed can be purchased in packets and some vendors may consider cucumber a native species. Although cucumber and bouncing-bet are not listed in Alberta as noxious/invasive, in contact with Kelly Coulee, S. AB weed coordinator and resource information suggested we nip these two in the bud. Cucumber has caused serious problems in the U.S. and Manitoba considers bouncing-bet invasive. We provided GPS coordinates to City and they plan to control. I let Marilou know about these invasives as both like moist ground, i.e. riparian areas. Hugh, John and I picked baby’s breath plants many bags from area along PP Park drive. Plan to EDDs Map plants in this area next spring and provide to City so they can control these bb areas. Mid Sept., John and I plan to continue our Connaught pond monitoring for new Eurasian buckthorn sites, and monitor how this year’s treatments went for Elacampane and one new buckthorn site John identified this spring.

**Mountain Bike Trails** and Coulee erosion. at Echo Dale Regional Park and area between gas city campground and Echo Dale Park (we are calling this area Echo Dale Env Sensitive Area per City’s Municipal Dev. Plan map). John, Bob and I worked with the City and 670 mtn. bike club to better understand and influence the development/location of trails. We had a few zoom and phone call meetings, and a field meeting. In summary, plans were made several years ago to build mtn. bike trails to support that recreation demand and to attract economy, i.e. destination point. Examples include mtn. trails developed at Burnside and in Redcliff by cemetery. The trails are intended to be multi-purpose so that bikers and walkers can use according to degree of difficulty. Our influence has largely been minimizing any duplication of present and new trails, reclaiming old trails that are not required, increased awareness and education, invasive species control, and perhaps a reduced presence of biking/trails in the west side of EDRP and what we call the Solitaire trail located on east side of D.U. pond. We were able to develop a 3 way plan to reduce the establishment and spread of invasive species on any new trails through a cooperative approach during trail construction and trail monitoring. Added spin-offs with the improved

understanding and communication of all 3 parties is the need to work together to keep OHV use from these areas, increased stewardship education with trail users walkers and mtn. bikes, no electric bicycles allowed on trails only electric assisted pedal bikes, clean up of Echo Dale ESA area from past scars both garbage and soil disturbance, implement passive access barriers to locations we do not want users to go re bikes or walking, and an additional litter clean up area to visit each "year". We continue to have issues with disturbance and loss of native grasslands, this situation has been a learning experience and the 670 club has many stewardship and environmentally knowledgeable members, especially their executive. We have several common issues about stewardship and environmental protection.

**City's Integrated Pest Mgt. Plan** is being drafted and this includes invasive species mgt. and control. We are having input to this plan.

**Municipal Development Plan** Issues Committee provided input to the City planners regarding the drafting of the new Municipal Development Plan. Overall a good plan with concerns and improvements recommended. Major concern areas involved the protection of Environmental Sensitive Areas and the future possibility that these areas may be developed for future residential needs. For example, areas like south of Echo Dale Park's south boundary (See Fig. 12 and 14 in MDP draft plan). GN recommended improved administration and planning protection of ESAs to minimize loss of native grasslands. For example, building onto present ESA's with Registered Ecological Reserves and Natural Areas. Also suggested looking at new housing models that can provide housing opportunities within existing city spaces for new housing opportunities including the downtown areas. A number of other suggestions were made dealing with market gardening, improved environmental sustainability approaches, lower income and health related concerns.

**MHC Vegetation Mapping** - Brent Smith is continuing to forge ahead with this project. He has gotten resource info help from the City re GIS data and he has developed some draft maps to do further testing. Some hiccups in the area of Police Point Park as a complex area to understand the bio-geography and the relationships of history, soils, veg, and moisture. Also, resources/time not available to do a full blown plant community inventory and mapping and we are looking at next best alternatives. I think we will have a working map available by end of next summer.

**Other** I have not heard anything back from the Buffalo Wind Farm development proposal. Assume it's on hold but will contact company for an update. Also, no update available about revised weed by-law, however, it will likely follow the approval of the integrated pest mgt. plan.

End of Issues Committee Report.

### **Second Addendum to the GN Board Minutes of September 1, 2020**

Post Board meeting, it was unanimously decided to purchase a dedicated computer for the GN books, at a cost of \$450.00.