

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

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

1. Call to Order: 1:45 pm.
2. Review and Adoption of GN Board Minutes from November 3, 2020. **CARRIED.**
3. Additions to Agenda:
 - a. **Responsibility of Board to ensure Upcoming Privacy P & P covering Club and IP is followed:**

Phil stressed that Board members and Committee Chairs must know the GN Policies & Procedures.
Phil noted he will notify Committee Chairs that they need to be familiar with Policies & Procedures. He will also include this information in the December Chronicle.
Moved that Phil contact the Chair of each Committee through email or letter, regarding review of GN Policies and Procedures. **CARRIED**
 - b. **GN Field Trip Waiver:** Eileen asked about deleting the previous list of members from Nature Alberta.
Angela and Ian will check with N.A. about this.
Eileen will put results in the Chronicle to inform GN members, as well as removing the reference to Nature Alberta from the membership waiver/form at the back of the Chronicle.
Ian asked if the list on the front side of the Field Trip form is possibly too detailed.
Phil noted he will pass concerns on to the Governance Committee.
Moved that we approve the amended consent form and pass on to the Governance Committee for refining. **CARRIED.**
 - c. **Webinar Dec. 7, 12 pm MST. Release of the Prairie Provinces Chapter of Canada in a Changing Climate: Regional Perspectives Report:** Register at <https://bit.ly/PrairieChapterEvent/>: Phil reported he will let Martha know, since this is too late for the December Chronicle. He noted there could be some good contact speakers for the Symposium project.
Phil noted this webinar contains a survey, and is pertinent to the climate of the prairies.
Ian questioned at what point GN members become involved outside the Club, and what point not?
Eileen noted that political guidelines need to be clear, especially to assist the GN member who is responsible for regular posting of events on Facebook.
Eileen said she will send out the Prairie Province webinar notice to GN members.
Phil requested that next month's meeting Agenda discuss what the Board will in fact promote, as a sort of future guideline.
 - d. **GN Scenic Acres Views Brochure/Poster:** (Board to check Nov.30 email) Background information states that the GN Issues Committee proposes to document the variety of significant, scenic views in Medicine Hat in order to build upon the work that has been done, such as an invasive species workshop, search and report program, litter clean up campaigns, (and many more examples are listed).
Board members discussed who the targeted audience of the brochure is, the availability of GPS already on cell phones, the usefulness of such a travel brochure, the need to have a budget drawn up, and other relevant points.
Phil noted he will discuss the intended target group with Gerry Ehler.
The topic is **tabled** at present.
4. Action Items:
 - a. **City Parks & Rec. Communication Table from Scott:** Phil reported that he wrote to Scott and gave him the GN contact names he requested. An Oct. 28 email from Scott requested that GN contacts communicate to the Department on behalf of the society, as a coordinated effort, and not in the capacity of an individual GN member of the community.
 - b. **Gerry's request for Invasive Weed Funding:** Hugh stated that he has already let Gerry know that the funding is covered under the Issues Committee Budget for 2021.
 - c. **Idea of Future Symposium on Climate Change:** Board see 2nd proposal emailed Nov.30: Phil noted the proposed topics he listed are starter suggestions only.
A steering Committee would first establish parameters on paper, which would be brought back to the Board for approval. Phil will write up a description of the jobs of the Steering Committee. Once approved, an Organizing Committee would be set up.
As a member of Methanex Community Advisory Panel, Ian suggested that Methanex could possibly allocate \$500.00 to the proposed Symposium. Methanex Community donations are dedicated to "broad scope" projects.
Thanks to David Gue and Martha, and Rob Gardner who sent helpful comments on topics, and possible funding for, the symposium proposal.
Angela asked if Casino funds could be used. Hugh will look into that option.

Moved, in principal, a GN Symposium on Climate Change be organized at a future date. **CARRIED.**

- d. **GN Club & MHIP 2020 Budget Updates, 2021 Budgets, & Financial:** Hugh noted the total insurance expense for the GN Club has more than doubled over the past three years.

Motion to accept the 2020 GN Club Budget Update. **CARRIED.**

GN Club 2021 Budget: Linda Fisher noted the indoor speaker program cost is uncertain because of possible future COVID restrictions and the possible need to rent a venue for the meetings.

Motion to accept the GN Club 2021 Budget. **CARRIED.**

MHIP 2020 Budget Update: Reduced Program Income (because of COVID) was compensated by Increased Federal Grants. Expenses were also decreased due to reduced staffing and decreased Program spending.

MHIP 2021 Budget: Submitted by Operations Committee, shows a reduced Program Income mostly due to COVID effects on school programs. Salary expenses will differ from previous years due to changing staff hours. Additional funding from Can. Emergency Wage Subsidy is uncertain, while Casino funding will hopefully be received the last quarter of 2021.

Motion to accept the MHIP 2020 Budget Update and the MHIP 2021 Budget. **CARRIED**

- e. **Governance Committee Meeting Report:** Phil and Hugh

- Phil stressed the importance of Board responsibility for monitoring and ensuring committee compliance of Policies & Procedures. He will mention this in the December Chronicle.

Phil asked if committees are keeping minutes of their meetings. Communications Committee does keep minutes, Angela stated, and Fund Raising Committee has a record of grants accepted and reports, Hugh noted. Linda said the Indoor Program, as a committee of one, does not take minutes but corresponds with the Communications Committee Chair. Linda noted she would follow P&P about providing information on upcoming programs to this Chair.

We need to determine what documents we keep and what not to keep, Phil stressed. We need to obtain printed documents used to produce GN brochures. To contact Holmes Printing regarding digital files.

Eileen stated she would contact Dwayne Myers to trace The Wildflower Brochure sources.

- As far as the new privacy P&P, Phil noted this applies especially to the MHIP.

Eileen stated that the new Membership Form automatically gives written permission to use photos. GN will now be using these new forms revised by the Governance Committee.

- Eileen said she would send new blank membership/waiver forms to Field Trip leaders which they need to have with them for GN trips.

Membership people would be responsible. Eileen volunteered to be in charge of this and she and Angela will work out the details.

Hugh noted that Paul updates the website for GN General Meeting Minutes and Board Minutes.

Phil stated that, according to Paul, every committee should have one person as a back up to the Chair.

Ian noted the Treasurer's books are backed up through IDrive. Betty, as secretary, has the encryption key. (See 6a.below)

Further discussion on the Governance Committee Meeting Report from November 25, 2020 is **tabled**. To be resumed.

5. a. Reports:

a. **Treasurer's Report:** Angela reported the 'Club' **Savings** Account stands at \$16,582.29 as of November 30, 2020 and the GN **Chequing** Account Balance is \$5,958.21. Total **Chequing/Savings** with shares is \$22,541.85.

Total Assets, including \$175.07 prepaid Insurance, comes to \$22,716.92.

Eileen reported that the Casino Balance as of Nov.30 is \$1,782.48. The MHIP Balance as of Oct. 31 is \$203,571.44.

Angela will be reimbursed for a computer mouse she purchased earlier.

Hugh will send a thank you letter form to Phil for donations, which will be sent out under Phil's name, as new president.

Phil will send a copy of his signature to Angela, as Treasurer.

- b. **Membership:** Eileen reported that membership is 83 at this time.

- c. **Correspondence:** Eileen reported no correspondence, except for emails from the Bank.

- d. **MHIP Operations Report:** Hugh reported a meeting was held on November 18, 2020 via Zoom to discuss the new Interpretive Program Website.

The benefits of Facebook and Website were mentioned, with overall agreement on their complementary uses.

Hugh noted that he will talk to Corlaine and Marty about a suitable top banner needed for the new website.

Transferring the domain name to SiteGround will first be tested by David Gue and Paul using "dummy" GN email addresses. If the SiteGround server is not suitable, the new website would be transferred to another server, likely by Sandfly Marketing.

At the meeting, David Gue suggested GN should have more than 1 contact listed with the domain name registrar and web hosting company. Access to key information such as passwords and renewal dates of domain names must be preserved, for example, when a person leaves GN suddenly. (See 6a. below).

Hugh noted the Privacy Requirements, discussed at the meeting, which are necessary only if the person is identifiable in a picture being taken. Suggestions include (1) IP posting a sign at events indicating photos are being taken.

And (2) if a photo is taken by IP, a consent form is signed by the person in the picture, or the legal guardian in the case of a minor, allowing the picture to be used.

e. **Budget Committee Reports:** To be discussed next Board Meeting January 5, 2021.

f. **Issues Committee:** Emailed Report from Martha follows:

1. **AWARENESS** of Issues

Wednesday Winter Walks continue through December and January 10 am. Look for weekly email for location. Also, some individuals who want more outdoor experience have paired up occasionally with others to walk at their own best time. Please encourage **Neighborhood Walks** for folks in your neighborhood. There's not so much driving involved in Neighborhood Walks, and perhaps participation will grow in the neighbourhoods. These are especially important for personal health in times when we are staying home more. Martha also led a Sunday walk with teens from Unity Lutheran Church where they are learning about their relationship with nature. A bald eagle soared over us and provided a dramatic beginning. These walks with the Unity teens will be seasonal: Fall, Winter, Spring and Summer. Identifying native plants and invasive species and noticing eco-systems goes along with every walk.

2. **GRASSLANDS CONSERVATION**, including tackling invasives:

Check out **UN Decade for Ecosystem Restoration**. It may be a platform to stand on for local conservation activities.

Prairie Conservation Forum Webinars help inform.

GN's "Case for Conserving Prairie Grasslands" was prepared by a team under the leadership of Gerry Ehlert. The document should be clickable on the front page of our website along with the Wildflowers, Butterflies, and Birding Trails. Who does this? SEAWA is interested in making it available on the SEAWA website, too, together with the SEAWA fact sheet on Ecological Services of Riparian Areas. Gerry consulted with Parks and Rec in his several meetings with Parks Department in the evolution of this document.

Prairie Grasslands Scenes in Medicine Hat is a work in progress also led by Gerry E. This pictorial document will become a partner to the "Case for Conserving Native Grasslands" and it will be a good complement to the other GN publications: Wildflower Brochure, the Butterfly website and the Birding Trails Book.

Riparian Plants and Scenes are depicted by 16 artists at the SEAWA pop up Gallery at the Arcade Plaza. In the same room is information about the riparian restoration projects lead by Marilou Montemayor at SEAWA. Though the gallery is currently closed, the pictures are visible through the large windows in the atrium/mezzanine. Individuals (and their bubbles) can also make appointments to visit the gallery by calling SEAWA 403 488-8110.

3. **INVASIVES**. Following the 2019 Saturday workshop on Invasives organized by Gerry with the support of GN and IP the awareness gained then has spurred the following activities:

ID and Reporting. Parks & Rec Dept. is developing an improved website for invasive ID and reporting. The Issues Committee IDs invasives with EDDMaps app on their weekly walks, and also reports to the Parks & Rec Dept.

Thorny buckbrush. Ger and John tagged Thorny Buckbrush throughout the city for City Parks and Rec to treat. Much has been treated; much more has been tagged. Thousands of understory seedlings need to be removed in the spring. Can we arrange for a seedling-pull event in the enchanted forest? What other groups could participate on their own best time? Sports teams?

Russian Olive at Connaught Pond and River. experiments are on-going by SEAWA for best practices for Russian Olive removal. SEAWA staff and volunteers have removed saplings from Connaught Pond area. After SEAWA staff reported seeing Russian Olive Saplings by the river, while participating in a GN Wednesday Walk, Marilou called for a weed pull three days later. 9 volunteers showed up and pulled/dug between 600 and 7000 saplings.

Climbing nightshade. On the fall "Great Canadian Shoreline Cleanup" event at Connaught Pond, climbing nightshade was discovered in the shade of the Russian Olive trees, close to the water. Marilou immediately launched an experiment to discover different ways to control growth of nightshade.

Leafy Spurge. Parks Department engaged the Monarch Goat company to bring goats to PPP to tackle the leafy spurge. Parks needs us to lobby for a return of the goats next year. The goatherd has said it's a three year process. Parks Department is struggling with budget priorities.

Horse Radish! Rob Gardner contacted his “Transition” network and attracted a couple dozen seekers of flavoring for their roast beef. The range for the horse radish has been expanding in the moist area in the creases of the coulee below the visitor center. It is likely a remnant of early settlers who lived in the coulees. There is a perennial plant on the sunny side of a coulee in CH which has remained the same size over the years; but that is a dry area.

4. LOOKING AHEAD. Ideas for action on Earth Day and Water Week are needed.

Partnering with SEAWA, Council of Canadians, Transition MH, CPAWS (South), and the MHC Ecology programs makes sense. Opportunities for partnering are coming up on **World Water Day (March)** where for over 15 years we have contacted other groups and businesses to showcase water conservation ideas at a display (City Hall, Mall, MHC, and finally settling at the Public Library) , and **Earth Day (April)** for weed pulls with SEAWA and clean-up the city with Parks and Rec.

(This point marks the conclusion of the Issues Committee Report above-Board comments shown below).

In today’s Board discussion regarding Invasive Buckthorn, Phil cautioned that there is a possibility the ecological footprint of Police Point Park could be negatively altered by disturbing a particular heavily vegetated nesting area and wildlife retreat. Phil noted that Gerry has proposed working on the rest of the park first, then approaching the area in question in stages.

Linda suggested a baseline established by a species survey and count before work is started.

Phil will communicate further with Gerry on the topic.

- g. **Indoor Committee:** Linda Fisher is working on a speaker spreadsheet, which will be updated in the future. It will be available for future heads of the Indoor Committee. Linda will ask Corlaine if she and Rob would be available to show their presentation on Mauritius on short notice, in the event that indoor speakers are suddenly allowed. Phil reported he also has slides on Costa Rica which could be available for presentation when needed.
- h. **Fund Raising Committee:** Hugh reported that he will search for grants for 2 projects over winter and spring.
- i. **Field Trip Committee:** John sent a November 30th Field Report to the Board. See highlights below:
 - Wednesday morning outings have continued through November (except for Remembrance Day) with fresh-air walks near Gas City Campground, and in Police Point Park and Kiwanis River Park in Harlow attended by four members. Bruce McLeod and I have also enjoyed cross-country skiing in Police Point Park and Elkwater.
 - We are still planning to continue Wednesday morning activities in December at 10 am with either walks, or depending on the snow conditions, with XC skiing or snowshoeing in City Parks or Elkwater. Stay tuned and check the Chronicle.

Phil reminded Board members of the December 20 Annual Bird Count. Call Marty at 403 529-6225 for an area. Please email bird count results to Marty at marty.drut@natureline.info if possible, rather than dropping off.

- j. **Communications Committee:** Phil reported the position of Communications Committee Chair is now open. The new Chair would need to be aware of GN policies.
- k. **Birding Trails:** Phil said there is nothing to report at this time.
- l. **Nature Alberta:** Ian and Angela noted that N.A. held a Board of Directors meeting November 21. See the December Chronicle. Angela reported the new website at <https://naturealberta.ca/> is continually updated. Angela will look into the limited liability insurance of Nature Alberta, as requested by Paul. Eileen noted that GN would like a copy of N.A. Financial statements. Ian commented that Zoe, from Nature Alberta, was not available at meetings to provide information about “Nature Kids”. Ian suggested that we already have our own GN Kids Club through programs provided by the Nature Centre. Would another Kids Club take away from the existing Interpretive Programs for children?

6. Other Business:

- a. **Document Storage:** (See Governance Committee Report & MHIP Op. Committee Minutes 4e & 5d above).
- b. **Casino Update:** Hugh reported that a Casino opportunity for GN may arise in the 2nd quarter of 2021 with funding available in the 4th quarter. Hugh noted that Dave McKenzie will continue as Casino Chair.
- c. **UERAB Revisions:** Phil raised the possibility of environmental groups receiving less attention with the new changes to the Urban Environment Recreation Advisory Board in Medicine Hat. Gerry Ehlert, as a previous UERAB member, sent an email explaining that this advisory board will be retired in favour of a Community Vibrancy Advisory Board (CVAB). He noted its mandate will be integrated into the CVAB based on review recommendations.
- d. **Next Board Meeting:** 1:30 pm January 5th 2021 via Skype
- e. **Adjournment:** Motion to Adjourn the Meeting at 3:45 pm. **CARRIED**

