

SOCIETY OF GRASSLANDS NATURALISTS  
Minutes of Grasslands Naturalists Board Meeting  
January 5, 2021 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: 1:27 pm
2. Review of GN Board Minutes from December 1, 2020.  
Phil noted that 4e. in Dec.1 Minutes under **Governance Committee Meeting Report** needed correcting. Phil was to “contact Holmes Printing regarding **Digital Files**”-not “cheques”.  
Adoption of GN Board Minutes from December 1, 2020. **CARRIED**  
Business arising from the December 1 Minutes as follows:
  - a. Phil reported the Calgary Company which purchased our digital files from Holmes Printing (See 4.e) would not release GN files to us. They would be happy to take care of revisions to digital files and printing of new ones. Phil will investigate further into retrieving digital files from them.
  - b. Angela noted that GN Committees and their Chairs from 2019 could be found on the GN Website.
  - c. Regarding 3c (What the Board will Promote) Phil recommended that Board members email their guideline ideas to him. The Governance Committee may wish to work on providing guidance.(See 4.a. below)
  - d. Regarding 5a. (a) under Treasurer’s Report, Phil has sent a signature sample to Angela, as Treasurer.
3. Additions to Agenda:
  - a. **Insurance Renewals:** Angela noted she received a cheque from Intact Insurance for a 20% premium rebate. Renewal date is Feb.1, 2021. Coverage does not include provisions for viruses such as COVID-19. Eileen and Angela will research the premium rebate and discuss it next month.
  - b. **Mountain Bike Club Initiatives:** Phil reported that the Mountain Bike Club has lobbied the City to create a river valley mountain bike trail between the Gas City Campground and Echo Dale Park. Andy Kirschenman has offered to share his knowledge of natural history and biking precautions with Mountain Bike Club members to help educate them on how to properly use the trails with least impact on nature. Linda Fisher commented on the degradation of the Solitaire trail by Mountain Bikes, especially after a rainfall, which is causing the trail to widen. Phil will mention this to Andy in an ongoing dialogue.
  - c. **Case for Grasslands Document:** Available on GN website under “GN BLOG”. Phil noted that Gerry, with the help of Martha, John, and others, has done so much work in developing the Case for Grasslands Document. Gerry reported that many groups and individuals have received this, including Investment Medicine Hat, Scott Richter with Parks and Recreation, James Will-Manager of P. & R., Kris Samraj-City Councillor, Community Development and Public Service Commission, and City Planners and Consultants involved in drafting the Municipal Development Plan and Echo Dale Future Regional Plan.  
Phil stated that we need to support Gerry’s efforts, and has asked Gerry what actions are needed next to keep this document alive? Gerry will get back to Phil on this topic.  
Board members suggested ways to show support: from drafting a letter, to signage, to setting up a meeting with the Mayor, to carrying out a study, to working with SEAWA to identify and protect all native grasslands within City limits.
  - d. **211 Alberta Initiative:** Phil reported that 211 is a community resource of the Provincial Government and the United Way, which has offered the possibility of listing GN as a community resource.  
Linda has offered to contact Shona Dickie, City of Medicine Hat, and to report to the Board at the next meeting.
  - e. **Virtual Online Workshop: Feb.1-5 2021:** John Slater suggested that we promote this workshop as a group activity. The Issues Committee budget has approved the \$150.00 early bird registration fee. Gerry Ehlert will be attending, and will send the receipt to Angela.  
Angela asked if Casino funds may be used for this. Hugh replied they may be used but permission must first be received from AGLC after a presentation to them.  
Phil noted that this workshop cannot be promoted as a GN event.
4. Action Items:
  - a. **Political Guidelines:** What will the Board promote? (See 2.c. above)
  - b. **Scenic View Brochure** (tabled at Dec.1.Board meeting): The Board discussed the Scenic Views of Medicine Hat discussion paper put together by John, Len, Martha and Gerry. The paper proposes that GN lead the building of an awareness and education tool by highlighting the beauty of the City’s views through photos, text, ecological description, maps, economic and social benefits, and stewardship actions. (Jan.5 email Gerry).

Board members expressed support for the paper as an educational tool and as a means of getting residents to explore different parts of the City. Linda suggested that the Birding Trails project could provide useful tips to Gerry on this proposed Brochure.

Phil will inform Gerry and colleagues of the GN Board support, and suggest that they work with Hugh concerning funding of the project.

- c. **Symposium on Climate Change:** The Board Members discussed Draft One of the Parameters to Guide Steering and Organizing Committees. The following ideas were put forward:

- Whether broad groups work better than breaking into smaller groups?
- Looking at this important topic- How will climate change impact people's lives in this area?
- Look at the long term situation. Set up a Steering Committee now.
- Having local parameters appealed to members.
- Ensure that two young people are on the Steering Committee.
- Whether to have break-out sessions or longer lecture presentations, or both.
- Aim for balance to make everyone welcome.

Thank you to Gerry, Rob, Martha and others who have also offered suggestions regarding content, as well as names of qualified speakers.

Phil noted he will revise the parameters slightly and will make a list of potential speakers, before the next Board meeting.

5. Reports:

- a. **Treasurer's Report:** Angela and Eileen.

Eileen reported the **Casino** balance as of December 31, 2020 is \$1332.00.

The **MHIP** Account balance, as of the same date, is \$189,169.46. This includes \$12,507.53 received in December from the Federal Government Canada Emergency Wage Subsidy (CEWS).

Angela reported the 'Club' **Savings** Account stands at \$16,585.11 as of December 31, 2020 and the GN **Chequing** Account Balance is \$7,163.22. Total **Chequing/Savings** with shares is \$23,749.68.

**Total Assets**, including \$95.26 prepaid Insurance, comes to \$23,844.94.

Total GN Club Income for Dec. 2020 was \$1,655.82. Total Expenses of \$715.52 leave a Net Income of \$941.52 for Dec.

Motion to Adopt the Financial Report. **CARRIED**

Eileen brought up the topic of invoicing the City for the five year GN Service Agreement with the City.

Hugh noted that he will verify the amount, and Angela will then email a copy to Scott Richter.

- b. **Membership:** Eileen reported that membership is in flux presently, due to renewals. There are approximately 12 or 13 new and/or renewed memberships this month over and above the current membership.

- c. **Correspondence:** Eileen reported there is no correspondence.

- d. **MHIP Operations Report:** Hugh noted that a job search for Chief Interpreter will commence in March 2021.

He said a job description will be finalized for advertising the position.

Eileen asked about the likelihood of holding an AGM in March of this year. Hugh will confirm the possibility with Paul.

Phil suggested an outdoor assembly would likely be in order.

Topic to be tabled for now.

- e. **Governance Committee Reports** (tabled. See Dec.1 Minutes-4e.)To be resumed.

- f. **Budget Committee Reports**

- g. **Issues Committee:** Martha and John.

See the Issues Committee Report from Dec.1, 2020 Minutes. Martha has also submitted the following timely reminder.

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

Partnering with other groups makes sense, (e.g. SEAWA, Council of Canadians, Transition MH, CPAWS, and the MHC Ecology programs). Opportunities for partnering are coming up on **World Water Day (March 22); Earth Day (April22); and resuming Wildflower and Invasive Plant Identification in May.** The two world-wide events provide great opportunity for public education. Perhaps webinars and links to **Climate Change and Grasslands/Riparian Conservation** can be worked into these annual public education events. The websites for each provide much information that works well with GN and IP work we are doing. Perhaps GN/IP can also challenge schools and other community organizations to plan their own events for these special Public Education Days (getting their education from the websites). Any thoughts from the Executive/Board are most welcome.

- h. **Indoor Committee:** Linda reported she will be working on a spreadsheet of past and recent Indoor Program speakers. This will act as an historical tool by keeping an updated record of previous speakers.

- i. **Fund Raising Committee:** Hugh noted the committee will start to get busy as requests for funding are received.

- j. **Field Trip Committee:** John Slater submitted the following Field Trip Report:

All Wednesday morning GN designated walks were cancelled in December and for early January due to AHS COVID-19 restrictions. Instead, members were still encouraged to get out and enjoy the health benefits of nature and fresh air exercise by following physical distancing and cohort guidelines.

The new signage for Donna MacLean in Strathcona Island Park and Dawn Dickinson in the Nature Park between Seven Persons and Ross Creeks, as reported in the December Sagebrush Chronicle, was viewed by individuals in mid-December.

With the arrival of snow in early November and in December, some individual members enjoyed cross-country skiing in Police Point Park as well as in Elkwater on at least six occasions. The weather and snow conditions were generally excellent, and the trees laden with hoar frost and new snow were spectacular.

Once the restrictions are lifted, resumption of activities together could be reported, so stay tuned and check the Chronicle or the Nature Centre.

(Phil noted that members may also be notified by email, but it will continue to depend on the AHS regulations).

- k. **Communications Committee:** Angela said there is nothing to report.  
Eileen asked if Dennis Baresco might be interested in submitting an article to the Chronicle. Phil will contact him to see if he is interested.
- l. **Birding Trails:** Phil. There is nothing to report.
- m. **Nature Alberta:** Ian and Angela reported N.A. has a new treasurer, as well as new Executive Director, Dr. Richard Schneider. Their website has also been rebuilt. Nature Alberta Magazine may be viewed at no cost online at <https://naturealberta.ca/magazine/>  
Rick Schneider emailed the Annual Report for 2019-2020, including financial statements, to Angela, who forwarded it to Paul Thibault as requested.

6. Other Business

- a. **Wind Turbines:** Hugh reported that John and Gerry have been looking into the question of wind turbine blade life and recycling difficulties.  
Ian asked about the feasibility of reusing the same location when replacing the turbine base, as a way of using the previous cement foundation.  
Phil mentioned a book entitled "Drawdown", co-authored by Paul Hawken, which discusses ways to reverse global warming.
- b. **Next Board Meeting:** 1:30 pm February 2, 2021 via Skype
- c. **Adjournment:** Motion to Adjourn the Meeting at 3:22 pm. **CARRIED**