

SOCIETY OF GRASSLANDS NATURALISTS  
Minutes of Grasslands Naturalists Board Meeting  
March 2, 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: 1:33 pm
2. Review and Adoption of GN Board Minutes from February 2, 2021. **CARRIED.**  
Business arising from the previous Board Minutes of February 2, 2021:
  - 3.b. SEATCA (Teacher's Convention): Phil reported that the Interpretive Program did not enter a presentation for the upcoming virtual convention on Feb.18 &19 since maximum display numbers had already been reached. This useful way of promoting awareness of MHIP and GN might be considered for the 2022 SEATCA.
  - 6.b. Letter to the Premier: Phil reported that he has not had a response from the Minister of Energy yet regarding the GN letter of concern on the coal exploration issue.
  - 5.g. Issues Committee: Angela noted the Welcome Wagon will close as of May, 2021, which means they will no longer be giving out gift packs. Martha had suggested GN might supply brochures and pamphlets to new residents of the City through this well-known Club.
3. Additions to the Agenda:
  - a. **Pollinator Garden Volunteers:** Phil reported Keziah Lesko-Gosselin, Parks Technician, is hoping to get GN volunteers to help with weeding and feeding at the Pollinator Garden in Police Point Park.  
Linda and Angela both spoke about needing to be informed on the difference between weeds and desirable plants.  
Hugh asked about putting a notice in the Chronicle to have members volunteer individually.  
Phil will mention the M.H. Horticultural Association to Keziah and see if the Club is interested.  
Moved to advertise in the Chronicle for Pollinator Garden volunteers, and also to suggest the City contact the M.H. Horticultural Association to look for helpers. **CARRIED**
  - b. **Rosebud Motorsport Proposal:** Betty noted a group at [www.savetherosebud.ca](http://www.savetherosebud.ca) is set up to encourage letters from individuals to the Premier, and other government officials, regarding the proposed racetrack development at the Rosebud Valley.  
Phil suggested that other organizations geographically closer to this area are in a better position to deal with this motorsport proposal than GN. The Red Deer Naturalists may have more contacts in this area. Also, a local group of residents already seem well organized to deal with this.
  - c. **SEAWA Letter of Support:** Phil reported that the letter of support, to assist SEAWA in obtaining a grant for funding for Planting and Care of Native Shrubs and Trees, was approved by all members of the GN Board. The letter has gone out to Marilou Montemayor, Executive Director of SEAWA.
4. Action Items:
  - a. **World Water Day Proposal:** Phil noted the Adopt-a-Pond email from Martha showing 18 City ponds. Board members had not received the attachment so Phil will forward that to us.  
The usual GN display would not be seen by many people this year, since the M.H. Public Library is only allowing 15 % of the usual number of patrons at this time.  
Moved not to have a GN World Water Day Library display this year, but to advertise in the Chronicle for volunteer participants, and to ask the Issues Committee to look after organizing the Adopt-a-Pond event. **CARRIED.**
  - b. **Zoom Meeting with Parks Dept. March 23:** Phil reported that Brent Smith, environmental instructor with M.H. College, is doing a Zoom presentation at 1:00 p.m. on an Ecological Map of the City, and suggested a Board member join the meeting. (See **October 2020 Chronicle** page 12. Issues Committee Report by Gerry Ehler on City Ecological Mapping).  
Gerry is the GN contact for Brent's project at the College.  
Linda suggested SEAWA may also want to attend the Zoom meeting.  
Phil noted he will ask Tina Regher if she is interested in attending, and will get back to the meeting organizers. Tina has reviewed environmentally significant and sensitive areas of the City in a GN sub-committee along with Marty Drut and John Slater. (See Board Minutes Feb.7, 2017)  
Phil noted that GN has had considerable input into various types of ecological mapping for the City, dating back as far as 2001 when he was President.
  - c. **Symposium Steering Committee:** Phil reported we have 4 Board members on the Steering Committee at present. They are Phil, Hugh, Ian and Linda. Four more members on the Committee would be ideal, Phil said.  
Suggestions from the Board included; MH College staff, ranchers, a City employee, someone from Cows and Fish, and possibly retired Cypress Hills Conservation Officer, Mike Avery.

Phil would like to have young people on the Committee as well. Angela will email Brooke's contact information to Phil.

- d. **GN AGM plans:** Board members mentioned that both the Paddlers' Club and the Archeological Society had online AGMs, but agreed that an AGM is better in person.

Linda asked if we want a speaker, or just a business meeting? Phil suggested a walk after the AGM might be an option. Hugh noted we need to send a call for nominations to Milt this month, in order to hold an outdoor AGM on May 25<sup>th</sup>, 2021. He will contact Milt about the call for nominations.

Board members will indicate, at the April 6<sup>th</sup> meeting, what their plans are as far as future participation on the GN Board.

5. Reports:

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

Angela reviewed the Profit and Loss sheet for the period February 2021. Total GN 'Club' **Income** for February 2021 was \$3,383.25.

Total Expenses of \$250.00 leave a **Net Income** of \$3,133.25.

Angela reported the 'Club' **Savings** Account stands at \$16,587.93 as of February 28, 2021 and the GN **Chequing** Account Balance is \$5,700.09. Total Chequing/Savings with shares is \$22,289.37.

**Total Assets**, including GST Receivable, comes to \$22,331.32.

Eileen reported the Casino Balance is at \$381.02. She said Angela will be learning how to manage Casino accounting.

Eileen noted there is presently a Balance of \$320,388.17 in the MHIP TD Account, and a Balance of \$500.05 in the Servus Account.

- b. **Membership:** Angela/ Eileen. Eileen reported there are 50 memberships presently.

- c. **Correspondence:** Eileen. No correspondence received.

Ian, member of Methanex Community Advisory Panel (CAP), reported that a letter will be received from Methanex advising that \$500.00 has been submitted to GN because of Ian's involvement on the panel.

- d. **MHIP Operations:** Hugh reported he attended a Zoom meeting last Wednesday, February 24<sup>th</sup> regarding the search for a new Chief Interpreter and Assistant Chief Interpreter. The positions will be advertised on the GN website as well as the City website.

Corlaine, Bob Townsend, and Hugh are members of the search committee.

- e. **Issues Committee:** Martha has submitted the following Issues Committee Report:

The Issues Committee has not met in the past month but issues continue to arise and we look for ways of addressing them:

**Big Picture Issues**

Climate Change &  
Biodiversity

**What's Happening**

RENAME: Climate emergency and extinction emergency  
Nature Based Solutions.  
Climate Conversations every other Thursday at 7 pm on Zoom.  
Climate Symposium 2022

**Subgroups of above**

**Grasslands Conservation-** led by Gerry Ehlert.

Tools: 1. Case for Conserving Grasslands.

2. Scenic Views in progress.

Education: Sask. Prairie Conservation Forum March 15, 16 17, 18 & 19

You can find a full schedule of webinars on the PCAP website:

<https://www.pcap-sk.org/upcoming-events/prairies-got-the-goods-week>

**Invasive Species.** ID and report to EDDMaps app on weekly walks and Adopt a Pond.

Many positive outcomes of the Invasive Species workshop two years ago.

On-going work by Ger, City Parks, SEAWA.

**Riparian Health.** 1. Assessment of R. Health of Seven Persons Creek was done by SEAWA four years ago.

2. Assessment of R. Health of the River was done by IP (Marty) roughly the same time.

3. SEAWA riparian restoration projects (three in city and 2 in country) hiring now for summer students.

Volunteers needed for Saturday weed pulls. First one in April

4. "Adopt a Pond" will find individuals, households, and groups that wish to visit a particular pond to enjoy, remove trash, and report invasives.

5. Big ISSUE: Silence in the ponds (no more chorus frogs in at least two ponds) as grooming in natural areas increases.

- Activities: 1. Weekly walk or Cross country ski to resume as soon as safe. ID plants; report invasives.  
2. "Adopt a Pond" to be launched for World Water Day March 22.  
3. Continue to build relationships with City, MHC, SEAWA, SEA Teachers Convention, County, CPAWS.

Other Issues: 1. Loss of EURAB and other advisory committees, No citizens' environmental advisory committee, and no person in SE Alberta municipalities with a designated job re. environmental management. No Commitment in MDP for smart growth principles.  
2. Council removed goals from the Environment Roadmap.

Dates: Check websites for these:

March 22 **World Water Day**. Launch of "Adopt a Pond"

April 22 **Earth Day**. Clean-up events. Strathcona, Ranchlands, Connaught Pond, PPP

March Last Saturday, **Earth Hour**. Turn off all electricity for an hour. share experience. (End of Report).

- f. **Indoor Committee:** Linda Fisher noted she plans to learn how to set up and conduct Zoom meetings, and will consider potential speakers to start zoom presentations in November 2021. She will submit an article to Milt for the Chronicle asking for assistance from someone who is proficient at Zoom.

Eileen suggested that Bruce Shepard, retired Esplanade Curator, might be able to assist Linda with this project.

- g. **Fund Raising Committee:** Hugh reported that the Scenic View Committee has drawn up a budget and may need up to \$500.00.

Gerry and Hugh will likely submit a grant approval to Ecotrust.

Hugh noted Paul Thibault is working to put the Scenic Views project online.

Moved that the Scenic View Committee be given \$300.00 as seed money to begin work on their project. **CARRIED**

Hugh will check with Paul about the amount of discretionary spending the GN Board may authorize.

- h. **Field Trip Committee:** John and Martha have organized GN Weekly Wednesday Walks including March 3 along a trail near the river near Windmill Garden Centre and March 10 at two ponds near Canadian Tire. Both commence at 1:30 pm. See a list of **Wednesday Nature Walks** below: The next few nature walks will explore some of the ponds in Medicine Hat.

The walks are most enjoyable when you dress for the weather and wear sturdy shoes or hiking boots with appropriate socks! Everyone is welcome!

If and when the group size reaches nine or 10 we will split into two groups.

**March 17. Masterpiece Pond.** Park on Southlands Drive near the front of the Retirement Residence. Path to the pond is on the south side of Masterpiece.

**March 20. Connaught Pond/Coulee** World Water Day clean-up with SEAWA. Phone 403-580-8980 to register. Arrival time at Connaught Pond is between 9 am and 10 am. Volunteers will disperse to four ponds.

**March 24. Two Northlands ponds**, one engineered and one natural! Meet at the Northlands Co-op Parking lot southeast corner and we will walk to the engineered Storm-Water Retention pond and then east along the paved path to the natural pond.

**March 27. "Power down"** - all electricity off for an hour at 8pm to celebrate 'Earth Hour'. Check their website for more information.

**March 31. Leinweber Pond.** Meet at the end of Crestwood Drive SE and Collins Crest. (approach from Carry Drive at the top of Scholten Hill).

**April 7. Ajax Pond and wetland.** Meet in Kin Coulee Park, north side of Seven Persons Creek, behind the ball diamond near Kinette Korner.

**April 14. Medicine Hat College/Cultural Centre Pond.** Park at the college or Culture Center but it may cost. Parking across the highway at the Visitor Centre is free.

**Start time for the walk will generally be 1:30 pm, but the time and location will be confirmed by email to all members of Grasslands Naturalists, a day prior to the walk. For details, call John at 403-866-8415, Martha at 403-878-9573 or the Nature Centre at 403-529-6225.**

**We look forward to seeing everyone out enjoying nature.** (End of Wednesday Nature Walks Announcement)

Saturday, March 27 at 6:00 am Is the Annual Manyberries Field Trip. See the March Chronicle for meetup details.

- i. **Communications Committee:** Angela will call Cypress County to see if the original Walsh Tourist Centre, now the Cypress County Welcome Centre, will accept GN brochures.

Phil noted that Dennis Baresco declined the invitation to become a member of the Communication Committee.

Originally, Eileen had suggested that Dennis become a member of the Communications Committee in order to write and submit articles through the Chronicle as a committee member.

Dennis is a Lifetime member of the Grasslands Naturalists Society, as well as a previous, long-time Editor of Nature Alberta Magazine and the Sagebrush Chronicle. He was president of GN from 1993 to 1995, and also managed the MHIP for several years. Dennis has made many invaluable contributions to Grasslands Naturalists Society since its earliest beginnings.

j. **Birding Trails:** Phil. Nothing to report at this time.

k. **Nature Alberta:** Ian and Angela. Angela reported that The President of Nature Alberta welcomed Brooke Kapeller as the new liaison for GN, after receiving Brooke's contact information from Angela.

Phil noted that Brooke will be expected to give a report at General Meetings once the GN Board reviews the report.

Angela will email this information to Brooke.

6. Other Business:

a. **Feedback on Future Ground Network Webinar:** Betty, Ian, and Angela watched the Feb.10 webinar on the David Suzuki Foundation, and Future Ground Network. Ian noted the Suzuki Foundation acts as network facilitator for the FGN. The FGN was formed to help grassroots groups working on climate justice, biodiversity, waste reduction and sustainable systems. The Suzuki Foundation will provide free access to training opportunities, webinars, and digital tools to help structure each local group. At present there are 75 grassroots groups participating across Canada.

Phil asked Ian to look into the group and report on the FGN at the next Board meeting.

b. **Next Board Meeting** 1:30 pm April 6, 2021. Hugh suggested the Board may be able to meet at an outside location rather than using Skype. Angela suggested a meeting at the Nature Centre at the tables, depending on the weather.

c. **Motion to Adjourn** 3:50 pm.