

SOCIETY OF GRASSLANDS NATURALISTS
Minutes of Grasslands Naturalists Board Meeting.
May 4, 2021 via Skype.

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

1. Call to Order: 1:32 pm
2. Review and Adoption of GN Board Minutes from April 6, 2021. **CARRIED**
3. Additions to the Agenda:
 - a. **Face Mask Litter Project:** Phil recommended to the Board that strings on discarded masks be cut. He said birds and animals are being accidentally trapped in the strings.
Gerry Ehlert and Paula Munro drafted a timely face mask article to the MH News, which Gerry outlined in an email to Phil on April 22, 2021. After discussion, the Board authorized Gerry to proceed with the project, as a representative of GN.
 - b. **Alberta Irrigation Expansion Project:** Phil reported on an email from Cheryl Bradley from April 19 of the Southern Alberta Group for the Environment (SAGE). The group expresses concerns about a proposed major irrigation expansion project in Southern Alberta financed by the AB Government, Canada Infrastructure Bank, and Irrigation Districts. Nature Alberta, and other conservation groups, are seeking more information about the project.
Phil will ask if a member of the Issues Committee would look into the topic.
 - c. **Medicine Hat City Council Strategic Plan:** In an email April 13 to the Board, Phil expressed concern about the recent reorganization by our City. Urban Environment and Recreation Advisory Board (UERAB) no longer exists, and the new Community Vibrancy Advisory Board appears to have no mandate to deal with the environment. The Board does not specifically mention the environment as one of its area of interest.
Phil questioned whether a meeting with the Mayor, or a member of City council, might be helpful.
Hugh suggested this become a topic for the Issues Committee.
Phil will talk to Martha.
 - d. **Secretarial Position:** In a recent email to the Board, John Slater suggested that an “ancillary secretary” might be one way of helping to fill the position of secretary, which is open at present.
An ancillary, or support secretary, would assist the executive secretary by taking notes at the General Meetings. Ideally, John suggested, this would provide the experience needed to eventually undertake the position of executive secretary to the Board Meetings. The Board discussed the advantages and disadvantages of the idea and thanks John for his interest and support.
 - e. **Art and Design MH College:** Phil reported that the students in the Art and Design Program (formerly Visual Communications) have received a grant to offer design services to non-profit groups. Marilou Montemayor of SEAWA suggested that GN would be an appreciative recipient.
Board members noted these services might be useful for displays at the Nature Centre, or posters for possible Climate Change Symposium development, or Scenic Views brochure ideas. It was suggested that one of these students may be interested in working as a member on the Symposium Committee. (See 4.d below)
Phil noted he will forward an email to Corlaine, Gerry Ehlert, and David Gue.
4. Action Items:
 - a. **Upcoming AGM:** Members noted that Medicine Hat is currently close to reaching the “hot spot” number for Covid. Hugh suggested that the AGM be postponed until the evening of June 22.
Angela noted that the Paddling Club held its AGM through Zoom recently. Ian and Angela will talk to Rick Redman of that club, and will look into the possibility of a Zoom presentation for GN.
An announcement of the postponement, and the change to June 22, will be placed in the Chronicle.
Eileen will contact Revenue Canada regarding the change of AGM date, since specific regulations exist for timing of non-profit AGM's.
Ian suggested that GN may want to purchase our own Zoom account since we may be using it for future meetings.
Hugh noted GN may be able to borrow the Kiwanis Club Zoom account.
 - b. **Community Spirit Award:** Phil reported that Gerry Ehlert agreed to nomination by John Slater, for this Award of Service under the ‘Environment’ category. John will fill out the necessary nomination forms which are due by Monday, May 31 to the Spirit Awards Committee.
 - c. **Tent Mountain Coal Issue:** Phil pointed out an email dated April 23 from Brooke Kapeller, Conservation Program Coordinator, CPAWS Southern AB., asking if GN would like to sign a letter from Becky of CPAWS in order to support the First Nations in their effort to put this project under a federal government environmental review. Brooke explained that

designating the project under federal review would “slow down the timeline significantly and increase assessment requirements”. The Board members unanimously agreed to having GN add their name to the letter of support.

- d. **Climate Change Symposium:** Phil noted he would like to have a meeting set up soon with the Steering Committee. He will give a report on plans at the AGM, and have the committee meet soon after. Phil will contact Ben White, graduate of MH College’s Environmental Reclamation Technician program, and staff of SEAWA, as a possible additional member of the Steering Committee.(See 3.e. above)

5. Reports:

- a. **Treasurer’s Report:** Angela and Eileen. Angela noted that the books must be reviewed before the AGM by two members, preferably those who have received both Covid-19 vaccines. She will contact John Slater. Hugh agreed to help check the financial records. Would Dave McKenzie be available also? Angela submitted the Profit and Loss sheet for April 2021. Total GN ‘Club’ **Income** for this period was \$385.00

Total Expenses of \$222.49 leave a **Net Income** of \$162.51 for April 2021.

Angela reported the ‘Club’ **Savings** Account stands at \$16,596.03 as of April 30, 2021 and the GN **Chequing** Account Balance is \$6,072.42. Total Chequing/Savings with shares is \$22,669.80.

Total Assets, including GST Receivable, comes to \$22,711.75.

Eileen reported there is a balance of \$299,333.00 in the **MHIP** Account as of today’s date.

- b. **Membership:** Angela/Eileen: Eileen noted there are up to 64 memberships presently, which equates to about 82 or 84 members. This number is quite good considering the past year of Covid restrictions, Eileen said. Eileen reminded the Board that GN did not take the Insurance offered by Nature Alberta, to their 40 member clubs, because it was not pertinent to us.

Ian asked if the waiver form on the back of GN Membership applications may be carried over year to year. Field trip attendees have asked this before.

Eileen will ask Paul Thibault if this would cause any complications.

- c. **Correspondence:** Angela reported there was no correspondence for GN at the Nature Centre.
d. **MHIP Operations:** Three applications have been received for the positions currently available at the Nature Centre. The deadline for date closure is June 1, 2021. After that, Hugh noted the selection committee will be interviewing applicants.
e. **Issues Committee:** Martha and John. See April 6, 2021 GN Issues Committee announcement of Earth day sapling removal, adopt-a-pond success and other projects in **April 6, 2021 Board Minutes**.

Medicine Hat News also posted a constructive article on GN volunteer efforts on Earth day, April 22, as well as explaining the adopt-a-pond project. Removal of invasive saplings with SEAWA on April 24 was also mentioned in the News article. (See. MH News Friday, April 23, 2021.)

- f. **Budget Committee:** Hugh noted the deadline for the 2021 Budgets and 2020 Budget updates for the GN Club and MHIP has been extended to the first week of June 2021, since the May AGM was postponed.

- g. **Governance Committee:** Paul submitted, for Board review, the GN P&P’s and the MHIP Terms of Reference that were updated by the Governance Committee. Paul stated in his email of April 27, that items initially approved by the Board will be posted on the GN website and a notice placed in the Chronicle for members to review before final approval by the Board at the June 1 meeting.

The Board members have read the revisions to the P&P’s and the terms of reference of MHIP from the Governance Committee, and give Approval-In-Principle to these revisions.

This will now be sent out to the membership for review.

- h. **Indoor Committee:** Linda Fisher. Nothing to report at this time.
i. **Fund Raising Committee:** Hugh noted he is waiting on results of the application to EcoTrust which was submitted in April. (See April 6, 2021 GN Board Minutes for details).

A decision should be received by May 26, 2021.

Hugh also reported that \$2,500.00 will be provided from the City for purchase of posts for the Scenic Views Project.

- j. **Field Trip Committee:** John/Martha (See May Chronicle for Wednesday Walk dates). Outdoor activities are reduced to 5 people at a time or less. Birding Field Trips are impacted for at least 2 weeks. May 30: Annual May Species Bird and Flower Count. Contact Marty at 403 529-6228.

June 5: SEAWA celebrates Environment Week at Connaught Pond from 9:00am to noon. All participants must register at executive@seawa.ca or through Facebook Messenger

- k. **Communications Committee:** Angela. Nothing to report.
l. **Birding Trails:** Phil reported 2,500 GN Birding Trails of SE Alberta have been distributed at this time. He said 650 books are remaining.

Angela will pick up a case of these books from Hugh to take to the Walsh Alberta Welcome Centre, for display at their May long weekend opening.

- m. **Bird Tales:** Hugh for Dee and Paul. Hugh reported that South Country Village seniors' residence continues to be interested in the Bird Tales Program, which is presently on hold because of pandemic restrictions. Volunteers will be needed when restrictions are loosened.
- n. **Nature Alberta:** Brooke Kapeller sent a copy of the monthly newsletter, Nature Network News. Angela reported that she will pay GN membership fees to Nature Alberta.

6. Other Business:

- a. **Report on Future Ground Network:** Ian noted that he submitted an intake survey to Future Ground Network. (Background information in Other Business, 6.a. **Board Minutes of April 6, 2021**). He reported, however, that FGN is limiting the number of groups they are accepting at the moment. For example, between February to March 2021, FGN had the capacity to accept only 50 groups. If they do not have space to accept groups at the time, FGN will contact the group once they are able to offer support. FGN does provide a useful website of digital tools and other resources for environmental groups at futuregroundnetwork.org/resources/
- b. **Report on Cattle Grazing and Invasive Knapweed Webinar:** Betty gave a brief summary of the Alberta Prairie Conservation Forum webinar offered by Kristi Gordon on April 14. Kristi spoke on Testing Management Intensive Cattle Grazing (MIG) as a Restorative Tool in Semi-Arid Rangelands. Board members have been watching various webinars to assist in the search for possible suitable speakers for the proposed Climate Change Symposium.
- c. **Methanex CAP Meeting:** As member of the Methanex Community Advisory Panel, Ian told the Board about an upcoming presentation. He asked the Board members what GN-related topics he should bring up. Some suggestions included the Buckthorn invasive species work being carried out, the goat grazing at Police Point Park to reduce invasive species, the Adopt-a-Pond project involving the entire community, and others. Ian suggested as soon as loosened restrictions allow the Methanex environmental speaker to present, it would be an ideal time for him to speak to the CAP panel about GN initiatives.
- d. **Next Board Meeting: 1:30 pm June 1, 2021.**
- e. **Motion to Adjourn:** Motion to adjourn the meeting at 3:20 pm. **CARRIED.**