

# MINUTES

## Society Of Grasslands Naturalists Board Meeting

November 2, 2021

### Via Nature Alberta Zoom

- 1. Call to order – 4:05 p.m. – Members present** – Phil Horch, Chairperson, Hugh Armstrong, Linda Fisher, Ian Turner, Angela Turner, and guests Paul Thibault and Martha Munz-Gue. Absent was Martha Maudsley and guest Gerry Ehlert
- 2. Review and adoption of Minutes from October 5, 2021** – The minutes were approved as circulated.
- 3. Credit Union Casino Account – Motion** to move the Servus Credit Union casino bank account from its present branch to the Crescent Heights Branch and that Phil Horch and Angela Turner be named signing officers to replace Hugh Armstrong and Eileen Cowtan.
- 4. Nature Alberta Representative** – Phil reported that Nature Alberta will no longer have representatives from every natural history organization on its board but will have representatives from zones instead. GN will be part of the South Zone which is made up of Grasslands Naturalists, Crowsnest Conservation Society, Friends of Helen Schuler Nature Center, Lethbridge Naturalist Society, Little Creeks and Rough Fescue Appreciation Society, and Purple Martin Conservancy. Between us and them we will need to agree on a NA representative and change occasionally on a rotation basis. Brooke Kapeler will no longer serve as our representative because she no longer lives in the south zone but has moved to Calgary. **Phil will initiate contact with these other societies and work out plan for representation with them.** Whoever is the rep will need to report to all six organizations.
- 5. Civic Election Results and implications** – Discussion took place on our new mayor and city councillors noting that many of them are first-time members and it will be necessary to establish lines of communication with all these new politicians, especially in light of the fact that the MHIP contract is coming up for renewal with the city in February 2022.
- 6. Policies and procedures updates** – Paul Thibault, Chairperson of the Governance Committee, brought forward updates to GN's policies and procedures for approval in principle in order that notice of these changes can be given to our membership online and through the Chronicle. One change was to the General Policy Section under Subsection: Awards and Donations adding a clause under "Donations" pertaining to Long-Service Awards for Employees. The other change was also to the General Policy under the Legal Subsection: Two additions were made under "Deliverables and obligations" and also under the heading of "Method of Payment". **A motion was approved in principle** to publicize these changes to the membership and after feedback will return to the board for final approval. **Paul agreed to submit these**

**updates to our membership online and through the Chronicle.** Considerable discussion took place on the importance of all committee chairs being familiar and knowledgeable of GN's policies and procedures. Hugh reminded us that there is a training session coming up in this regard.

7. **Buckthorn Project Report** – In the absence of Gerry Ehlert, Phil gave a report on the Buckthorn Removal Project in Police Point Park pointing out that some changes were made to the project plan in order to alleviate negative impacts when removal takes place in the area of heaviest infestation. Removal will be done in small increments over time instead of all at once. Removal will take place in late summer and fall instead of June in order to avoid bird nesting season.

8. **Casino Plans and Manager** – Hugh reported that Justine has agreed to serve as Casino Manager for GN in late February and work has started to secure our license for our assigned dates. Recruitment has also started for volunteers to work on our casino dates.

9. **Ranchland Trails Update** – Considerable discussion took place on the intrusive trail development the city has undertaken on the new Ranchlands Trail. Concern is being expressed on excessive damage to native grassland and the natural prairie preserve. Gerry has written a letter of concern addressed to Ian Hakes, Public Lands Manager for the City of Medicine Hat and discussion took place on how to proceed with this letter. It came to light that this letter was written without first being vetted by the Issues Committee Chairperson, Martha Gue. **It was decided that the letter would be turned back to the issues committee for more thorough vetting and then come back to the board with their full recommendation.** Discussion included the concern that this letter might be suitable to send to Ian Hakes but it is too long and technical to be sent to the mayor and councillors so early in their terms. This letter may also interfered in a strategy that the board wishes to develop in communicating with the new mayor and councillors and establishing rapport with them.

10. **Climate Symposium Update** – Phil gave an update on progress in Climate Symposium Planning. Two new members have been added to the Steering Committee. Linda Fisher has agreed to return to the committee after a leave of absence and GN member Jan Kay who has considerable conference planning experience has also agreed to join the committee. The committee presently is developing a draft budget for the symposium and is identifying speaker topics and potential speakers. Their next meeting is scheduled for November 10.

11. **Rangeland Forum** – Phil reported that this forum is planned for all day November 18 and will be entirely online. He recommended that a GN member should attend and report back on the forum as it could have valuable information and speakers for our own purposes. The cost is \$40. It was agreed that Ian and Angela would attend and GN would reimburse them for this registration fee.

12. **Volunteer Connection** – Ian reported on how this community online service works and how GN (and possibly MHIP) could make use of it to recruit new volunteers. He has registered us on this website and there was full agreement that we should try it out. **Ian will follow-up and post GN volunteer requirements on this site and he will be our contact person on it.**

13. **Methanex Representative Report** – Ian gave a report in his role as our Methanex Representative. He stated that Methanex is looking for community projects to be highlighted. Discussion took place on our Adopt-A-Pond initiative as a good one to be publicized and one that organizations throughout the country might be interested in duplicating if they are made aware of it. **Ian will follow through with that.**

14. **Committee Chair Budgets** – Paul reported that only a few budget requests have come to him to date. Everyone was reminded that November 15 is the budget submission deadline. **Phil will submit another reminder to all committee chairs about the deadline in this coming Chronicle.**

15. **Treasurer's Report** – Angela submitted the October balance sheet and the October profit and loss statement for approval. **Motion was made and approved** to adopt these reports as submitted.

16. **Membership** – Angela reported that one member had prepaid their membership fee for the coming year. **Angela will supply all board members and Martha Gue with an up-to-date membership list.**

17. **MHIP Operations Committee** – Hugh gave a report on good progress being made with transitioning the Chief Interpreter's position. Operations seem to be going well. Negotiations for a new contract with the city will be starting soon.

18. **Issues Committee** – Martha's written report to the board was reviewed and she added information about progress with the Adopt-A-Pond program. Discussion took place on her report's suggestion that the City of Medicine Hat needs to be approached about returning to its former Master Environmental Plan or something similar to it. The Ranchlands Trail fiasco could have been avoided if the city was structured to consider the environment implications in all its activities like it once did in years past. She suggested that such a plan using the River Valley Study and the Environmental Roadmap as background to fulfill the new Municipal Development Plan 2020-2050 should be proposed to our new mayor and councillors rather than focusing on just one issue such as the Ranchlands Trail system construction. The board was in agreement. Given the fact that our mayor and 6 out of the 8 councillors are all beginners in their new roles, we agreed that they need some time to become oriented in their roles before we actually approach them about this over-arching proposal for city government. **Phil and Martha Gue will develop a strategy for bringing this issue before the mayor and city council early in the new year after our new city government has settled into their new roles.** Phil and Martha will consult with and involve any other GN members who may be able to give valuable input to this initiative.

19. **Indoor Program** – After considerable discussion it was decided that we would attempt an indoor zoom program for our November meeting. Rob and Corlaine Gardner are willing to do this online with their Mauritious Presentation. **Ian, Linda and they will work out the details** for doing this and it will be promoted in this coming Chronicle Issue. They will give Milt all the necessary information in order that our member will feel comfortable attending an indoor program in this manner.

**20. Fund-Raising Committee** – Hugh reported that one grant has been applied for from the City of Medicine Hat on behalf of the Scenic Views Project in order to secure funding for more signs. Other than that there is nothing new to report.

**21. Field Trip Committee** – Martha reported that there will be Wednesday Neighborhood walks as usual. Phil reported that November is a slow birding month and may not be a field trip but he will check with Milt. It was reported that the MHIP has advertised a field trip to see Snow Geese for November 7 which members can attend.

**22. Communications Committee** – No report.

**23. Birding Trails** – No report.

**24. Next Board Meeting – Tuesday, December 7 at 4 p.m. Either zoom or at Ian and Angela's home depending upon covid situation. If we meet in person all board members doing so should be vaccinated. If any are not, they could zoom the meeting.**