

Grasslands Naturalists General Meeting
Nature Centre Police Point Park
Tuesday, February 28, 2023 7 pm
Hybrid - at Nature Centre and online

1. Call to order – Phil Horch 7 pm

2. Land Acknowledgement - Phil

3. Member's Exciting Sightings - Phil notes some of the 'non-sightings' as well. David Gue saw 5! Bunnies outside the Nature Centre underneath the bird feeders. Phil heard coyotes while coming into the park tonight. Bonnie and Matthew saw a porcupine up a tree while cross country skiing. Corlaine and Rob on the way to Lloydminster saw a long tailed weasel bounding across the road! There's a fantastic display of snakes at the nature centre. Giselle and Daniel saw porcupine, beaver, deer, bunnies. A bald eagle had a fish. Rob wants Phil to lead everyone on an informal owling expedition to look for the saw-whet owl after meeting.

4. Review and Adoption of minutes from Jan. 24/23 General Mtg - Martha Maudsley Adopted and carried as posted and online

5. President's Report - Phil March 28 AGM. John Slater reports no nominations so far. Martha Maudsley willing to continue as Secretary. Angela Turner staying on as Treasurer. Martha Munz Gue willing to stay on as VP but prefers someone else to step in. Phil cannot put off his medical issues so needs someone to stand up as President. **Nominations are also being accepted as Honorary Lifetime member. Strong Towns and Environmental frameworks are proposed by our city.** GN has regular meetings with Kevin Redden. Strong Towns may put pressure on environmentally sensitive areas so Scenic Views project helps to identify and rally people to ensure development on sensitive areas like SaratogaPark area. Plans are underway to recognize long-time member **Eileen Cowtan in a memorial on Saturday April 29 at 4:30pm around the campfire in Police Point Park.** More details in the Chronicle.

Casino Saturday/Sunday August 5th and 6th all hands on deck to work as it's our biggest fundraiser. Thank you to Hugh Armstrong and Paul Thibault for their hard work renewing our insurance. **Wrote 2 letters to Sonja Savage regarding concerns on environmental assessments being done.** Gerry took the mic to outline information about the **proposed solar farm north of Medicine Hat.**

Gerry Ehlert Update - "Saamis Solar Park Limited, a part of the DP Energy group, (has applied to Alberta Utilities Commission) to construct and operate a 325-megawatt solar power plant, designated as the Saamis Solar Park, and the associated Grian 1056S Substation (collectively, the project), under the *Hydro and Electric Energy Act*. The project would be located on approximately 662 hectares of privately owned land within the urban limits of the city of Medicine Hat, Alberta. Specifically, the project would be located within portions of sections 11, 12 and 13 of Township 13, Range 6,

west of the Fourth Meridian, and within portions of sections 7 and 18 of Township 13, Range 5, west of the Fourth Meridian. “

Unfortunately, GN was not able to make the AUC submission deadline date. In place, I submitted a letter to AUC outlining my concerns about the proposed Saamis Solar project. In summary, I informed AUC that I am opposed to solar development on native grasslands. Solar development on such lands would negatively impact biodiversity, ecological health and function, wildlife species (plants and animals), and other economic, environmental, and social benefits. I am okay with solar development taking place on the Brownfield and tame pasture lands located in the west side of the project area, subject to following environmental requirements. I am registered to participate, and will now be gathering more environmental information about this area to become better informed. Since my letter, I now have a ecological site map of the project area developed by Brent Smith at the College (dominant sites are sands and sub-irrigated), and confirmation from Cheryl Bradley with AWA about the endangered species tiny cryptanthel likely in the area. I am hoping to find out the location and extent of the native grassland plant communities on the sites west of the Brownfields and tame pasture, and learn more about the private land ownership of these project lands.

6. Vice-President's Report - Martha Gue - n/a

7. New Bylaws – Paul Thibault

Special Resolution

Motion is to approve the amended bylaws as proposed. - Carried unanimously

8. AGM Notifications - see Phil's report above.

9. Strong Towns & Environmental Framework - Phil - see Phil's report above

10. Irrigation - Letter From Minister Savage - Phil - see Phil's report above

11. Eileen Cowtan Event - see above

Committee Reports

1. Finance - Angela - casino \$8491.79 after paying insurance GN chequing \$7637.35 Savings GN savings is \$16,794.61 and that \$10,000 of this amount has been invested in a 15 month GIC

2. Membership - Angela - 53 Individual, 51 family, 7 lifetime

3. MHIP - Alicia 6 staff working, Ian is away until April 20th. Teachers regularly call for school programming and while cross country skiing hasn't worked they found other programs that do. New display is on until March 31 on snakes. First Family Day program since COVID in conjunction with Kiwanis, 22 volunteers, 739 people came down that day. Have applied for summer student grants, as well as sent out 100 letters to private donors. **Hugh** thanks Bruce Macleod for auditing books.

4. Indoor Program - Linda – Linda is happy Mhairi Donnelly stepped in tonight to give a program on Scotland. Upcoming programs are Marilou Montemayor at March 28 AGM on Russian olive trees. April 25th Members night with a nice list of topics lined up.

5. Field Trip Program - Milt, John, Martha MG - John says still having walks at 10 am Wednesday mornings. March 22 will be 2 events: a tour of the water treatment plant and then a webinar at 1:30 Collaboration with Nature at Nature Centre. Hoping to arrange a tour of Big Marble Farms greenhouse. End of April Cyprus growing plant. No birding plans but watch Chronicle for Manyberries trip.

6. Fund-Raising - Hugh

7. Issues Committee - Martha MG, John

8. Communications - Corlaine - Watch our GN website run by Paul. Tina runs and keeps Facebook page updated. Think about sending photos to her. Milt has been doing Chronicle which includes a new column 'Well Worded' on books.

Introduce Guest Speaker - Linda- Due to unforeseen circumstances, Morganne Wall's presentation for Feb 28 has been postponed.

Speaker Mhairi Donnelly - A Brief Look At Scotland

Mhairi, one of our newest Interpreters at the Nature Centre, has graciously stepped in at the last minute. She will be providing us with a very general overview of the landscape, language, food, culture and political system in Scotland.

Thank Speaker and close meeting - Linda