

Brooks Nature Area

Minutes

January 16, 2025

Members present: Patty Hoch-Melluish, Justin Miller, Brian Huggett, Erin Skidmore, Ian Campbell and Janet Schoenmeyer

Technical advisor present: Jim Coury

- A. The minutes of the November 21, 2024 meeting were approved.
- B. The January 16, 2025 agenda was approved
- C. Marshall resident Christy Benson was present.
- D. Park update on monies through 11-30-24: \$31,767.70
- E. Christy Benson informed the group that she has applied for the BNA board position that needs to be filled. She attended the meeting to introduce herself and learn more about the BNA working group.
- F. Discussion ensued concerning possible use of funds hopefully received from Eckford Township in 2025: repair of the observation deck support posts, a clover spreader, wildflower seeds, invasive species treatments, a trail counter, 5 loppers, and paving the parking lot. Justin Miller will investigate the cost of a parking lot. He added that the airport will be paved in 2026. To save money, the crushed asphalt could be possibly used in the BNA parking lot.
- G. Justin stated that Fredonia Township has \$800 remaining in their fund that they are willing to give to BNA towards the 2025 burn. He added that the bench they gifted BNA has finally arrived. We will wait until spring to place it in the park. Patty Hoch-Melluish will order signs recognizing Fredonia Township for their gifts of the shed and two trash cans.
- H. Erin Skidmore stated she had no further information to give concerning Marshall's Management Plan. Justin added that now the plan will be sent to the State. Jim Coury reminded the group that in the past our board reviewed what had been accomplished the past year in January and then set goals for the coming year; a practice that we need to continue. Patty agreed and said we should at least revisit our management plan periodically to check if updates are needed.
- I. Erin stated that the BNA Luminary Hike is set for Saturday, February 15, 6:30pm to 8:30pm. If inclement weather occurs, the event will be cancelled. Erin will post the event on Facebook. Janet Schoenmeyer stated that she will email Greg Strand and inform him of the hike so that he can inform Stuart Lake residents. The parking issue was discussed. Justin suggested asking city workers to cut down the brush on the side of the road in front of the park entry, so that people will have more room to park on the side of the road. The ground needs to be frozen for participants to be able to park their cars in the fields. Police helping with the traffic would be welcome, as would a sign stating "Event Ahead" on the corner of Stuart Lake Rd. Any board member is welcome to ask community members to help sponsor the event. Help will be needed from all board members for set up. Erin will email members for times and information on tasks.

- J. Brian Huggett introduced an owl monitoring project that he wishes to place in BNA. It would consist of placing two audio dataloggers in the park from January 2025 to April 2025. The data loggers would capture any owl calls to discover what owl species are visiting the area.
Unanimous approval from Board.
- K. Work day schedule discussion tabled due to Lauren Bruggeman's absence.
- L. Maintenance Items
- a) Justin Miller will research what company built the observation deck to ascertain what direction to use for repair of the support posts. Janet Schoenmeyer will check past minutes to discover the name of the company and inform Justin of her findings.
 - b) Justin stated that the city workers cleaned up the downed trees on the lakeshore loop.
 - c) Discussion concerning the solar lights that were placed in the park without permission. Group discussed establishing a policy concerning personal property placed in the park going forward. Discussion to continue.
 - d) Mowing footprint discussion tabled until spring.
 - e) Jim Coury made pointed remarks on several areas concerning BNA: *He stated that one project we need to tackle is the viewshed near the lake and the Talmadge Creek wetlands, which need opening 50-to-100-foot gaps by taking out the overgrown willows and trimming the trees and shrubs. *He recommended clover/trefoil seedings in the spring in Field 1 on the north trail by the north woodlot. *After the prescribed burn in Field 3, he suggested spreading white Dutch clover, red clover and bird's foot trefoil seeds.*Jim also hopes to spread wildflower seeds in Field 3 after the prescribed burn; hopefully with Ian Campbell and Lauren Bruggeman's help, since they did so in 2024. *Jim described the hedgerow parallel with the North Trail and the North Woods that was cleared by the city when they bulldozed the fallen large, red oak tree. The hedgerow of young oak, hickory, sassafras and apple saplings were cut at the ground, but may regenerate this spring. Cages will be needed to protect them. *Jim reminded the group that in the past, native trees and shrubs have been purchased from our Conservation District and Alpha Nurseries located in Holland, MI. He recommends using "Landscaping for Wildlife" written by the Minnesota DNR as a great guide in ordering natives. *Jim wrote a list of native shrubs that he recommends BNA purchase if funds are available. The list is included with these minutes.*Jim also suggested that a turtle basking board for the north shore of Stuart Lake would be a great scout project.
- M. Donations can be accepted by participants at the Luminary Hike. Erin is welcome to be the caretaker of funds received. All check donations should be made out to Brooks Nature Area.
- N. Erin is not able to edit or change posts on the Brooks Nature Area Facebook page. She has been unsuccessful in contacting past administrator Cheryl Vosburg. Justin suggested starting a new page, but copying any pertinent pictures on the old page.
- O. Table bird and bat house discussions due to Don Jewett's absence.
- P. Adjourn. Next meeting – March 20, 2025, 5pm at Marshall PSB

List of possible native shrubs that would increase BNA biodiversity

High bush blueberry

Gray dogwood

Huckleberry

Alternate branched dogwood

Kerr crabapple

Bayberry

Black haw viburnum

Maple leaved viburnum

Black & red chokeberry

Ninebark

Rosa rugosa (red)

Woods rose

Michigan holly (winterberry)

PawPaw tree

Witch hazel

Sweet birch tree