

Brooks Nature Area

Minutes

March 21, 2024

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

Members absent: Justin Miller and Margaret Steele

Technical advisors present: Jim Coury and Don Jewett

- A. The minutes of the January 18, 2024 regular meeting were approved.
- B. The March 21, 2024 agenda was approved.
- C. BNA volunteer Lauren Bruggeman was present.
- D. Dave Phaner presented the current balance for the BNA fund at \$35,666.04.
Brian Huggett will send out digital copies of the BNA map, as requested by members.
- E. a) Don Jewett reported that he is behind in checking out the birdhouses to see what work needs to be done on them; will do so in the next few weeks. He added that the bat boxes need to be installed. He is trying to come up with a plan that places the boxes 20' high. Poles rather than trees would be ideal. The martin house has no residents. Possible means to entice the birds were discussed. Don is hoping for the same number of bluebirds returning as counted last year, which was 16.
b) Dave Phaner attended the Boy Scout Troop 373 meeting recently. He gave the scouts some Eagle Scout project suggestions: Mallard, Wood Duck and Northern Flicker nesting boxes. He also thought some type of box on the observation deck with binoculars, a bird book and notebooks with pens or pencils would be beneficial to visitors. Ian Campbell suggested a large, laminated sign with labeled pictures of possible birds visiting the lake.
- F. a) Discussion ensued over how to acknowledge financial help from Eckford and Fredonia Townships. Suggestions included using pavers with names of benefactors, laminated informational posters in the display case, the names of benefactors included on the tree tags and a small sign posted on the outside of the proposed shed. Patty Hoch-Melluish reported that Eckford Township is giving BNA money for another invasive species treatment. Janet Schoenmeyer stated that she will send them another thank you note.
b) Brian Huggett suggested everyone read the original Site Management Plan by the May 16th meeting. They should mark the goals that are no longer relevant and add goals they feel are missing. Then consensus can be reached on what goals are still pertinent. Brian added that maintenance is a large need for BNA. The parking lot for instance, needs a gravel application to fill in the pot holes.
- G. Erin Skidmore reported great success with the Luminary Hike held on January 27. Approximately 150 people attended. She received one complaint. An elderly woman had difficulty walking to the trail head due to her use of a cane and poor access to a close parking spot. Everyone agreed that parking on the road was hazardous and the problem has to be rectified before we hold another public event. Extending the parking lot was discussed as an option, but the details will have to be worked out.
Ian would like to see an Earth Day event at BNA (April 22). Everyone agreed, but no consensus was made on what activity could be planned.
Erin expressed interest in having access to the BNA Facebook page. Ian Campbell and Lauren Bruggeman are also willing to add pictures and videos of BNA activity. Dave will speak with Justin Miller on how control of the BNA Facebook site should be handled. Everyone agreed only BNA Board members should have the privilege of controlling the content.

- H. Dave reviewed the usual spring projects that needed to be accomplished, such as clearing brush by the side of the trails and adding mulch to the Lakeshore Loop. The Songbird Trail is very wet. Possible suggestions: fill in the wet trail spots, close it off or move the trail inwards. Jim Coury gave a thorough report on the successful burn that was carried out by Plant Wise on March 19. Ian Campbell and Lauren Bruggeman requested permission to sow wildflower seeds on the area that has been burned. Dave gave permission and said they could spend up to \$50 for seed and to hand in the bill after purchase. Jim Coury, Patty, Ian and Lauren spread clover seed on the edges of some of the trails. Jim Coury will use up the remaining clover seed that hasn't been sown. The brambles on the edge of the burn areas will need to be clipped. Don added that those who cut down brush should pile it in tripods instead of just laying the dead branches on the soil. Discussion continued concerning closing the Woodland Loop, since many of the dead ash trees are a potential hazard. Jim Coury agreed to examine the woods to survey what percentage of ash are still standing.
- I. Dave Phaner spoke a little about how the BNA was formed, but the lengthy meeting covered so many topics that there was a time limit to cover all the history.
- J. Next meeting May 16, with potluck. Janet will email members a week earlier and request them to "reply all" when stating what they intend to bring, to avoid duplication.

K. Adjourn

Submitted by Janet Schoenmeyer