

Brooks Nature Area

Minutes

March 20, 2025

Members present: Patty Hoch-Melluish, Brian Huggett, Ian Campbell, Lauren Bruggeman, Christy Benson and Janet Schoenmeyer

Members absent: Erin Skidmore and Justin Miller

Technical advisors present: Jim Coury and Don Jewett

- A. The minutes of the January 16, 2025 meeting were approved.
- B. The March 20, 2025 agenda was approved.
- C. Public Comments
- D. Park update on monies through 12/31/2024: **\$30, 200.20**
- E. Members of the Board welcomed new member, Christy Benson.
- F. Eckford funds 2025. Areas where the funds could be used:
 - a) Deck repairs – need some quotes from builders.
 - b) Invasive species management
- G. Fredonia funds 2024/2025
 - a) The bench that was paid for by Fredonia Twp., arrived. We will need to discuss where it should be placed in the park.
 - b) Patty will order the plaques for the shed and trash cans that will name Fredonia Township as the donor.
 - c) Fredonia is planning on giving \$700 towards the prescribed burn which will cost \$3,400. The city of Marshall will pay the remaining amount. No date is set at present. The weather plays a huge part on when the burn will occur.
- H. Erin Skidmore, Coordinator of the Luminary Hike, was not present. Those that attended, reported that participants were enthusiastic concerning the event. Approximately 40 people attended. Donations amounted to \$80. Suggestions that were made to entice more community involvement: An article in the Community Events of the AdVisor, two tarps to make a wind screen at the pavilion and cocoa offerings if a plan can be thought out that is not too complicated.
- I. Lauren Bruggeman created and distributed an Annual Work Schedule. Consensus agreement that the 2nd and 4th Wednesdays of the month from 10-2p.m. might work. Lauren will email reminders and a calendar of events. Seed plantings need to be completed during February to early May. Don Jewett stated that the nettles in the orchard area need to be cut down within the next month. Planting some cuttings from the elderberry bushes is another prospective task.
- J. Brian Huggett stated that he hasn't found any recorded owl sounds yet, but hasn't gone through all the tapes. He's hoping he'll eventually discover something and will share his findings at the May meeting.
- K. Patty shared that she took some classes on vernal pool monitoring. She is planning on using her newly discovered information to observe activity in a BNA vernal pool. She will email information to all and inform others when she plans to conduct the project, if anyone wants to observe with her.

L. Maintenance Items:

- a) Patty stated that we need to start tracking the burn schedule. We need names or numbers to identify each field with past burn dates. Brian will work with Jim Coury on needed schedule.
- b) Janet Schoenmeyer will contact local craftsman, Scott Gearhart to ask if he's interested in repairing the posts at the observation deck and if so, ask for a written quote.
- c) Patty stated that BNA needs a new written policy going forward that forbids any personal property to be placed in BNA. Discussion ensued how best the present situation can be handled without negative repercussions.
- d) Mowing footprint: Everyone agreed that the main trails are too wide. The only exception is the trail by the orchard where the nettles are too close to the path. Board members discussed the burden of paying for mowing the trails. All agreed that we need more help from the city to pay for maintenance. The city provides mowing for all the other Marshall parks and BNA is not acquiring additional revenue which results in dwindling funds. The Board decided that this is a subject that needs to be discussed with Justin Miller.
- e) Patty suggested the Board take a walk of the BNA premises in April, (6-7:30pm). She will come up with a date and email everyone to see who can attend. The goal would be to decide what content any new signs should contain and to check out the condition of the park and what areas need work.
- f) Brian researched the price of trail counters. He stated that many of them are expensive. He will investigate one that costs around \$50 and see if it is a viable choice.
- g) Patty stated that we need a work day. There are areas that need to be cleared by the lake to establish view sheds, clover and wildflower seeding and native tree/shrub transplanting. Ian reported that he and Lauren would like to spread wildflower seeds again this year. The Board agreed to a purchase of \$200 for seeds. The seeding can only be done after the controlled burn.

M. Discussion concerning donations to BNA with the City. The group questioned if we can hold a fundraising project. The city attorney will have to be contacted for clarification. Lauren Bruggeman suggested a photo contest of anything found in BNA, if we are able to sponsor a fund-raising event. There could be an entry fee with a prize for the winner. Jim Coury stated that friends of Northfield Mandolin held an event that gave BNA \$200.

N. Erin Skidmore was not present to discuss BNA Facebook issues.

O. Don Jewett stated that he and Jim Schoenmeyer cleaned out all of the birdhouses February 14. It took them 2 hours. Discussion ensued concerning placement of the bat houses. Don added that 3 poles are needed to be placed with a height of 15 ft., where the sun is shining most of the day. He stated he thought 4" to 6" diameter poles were a better way to go vs. trees, where branches will need to be cut to make an area clear for the sun to warm the houses. Some members were against using poles, arguing that their presence takes away from the park's natural setting. Either method, we will need the city's maintenance workers to help us place the bat houses. Stuart Lake residents will need to be informed if we go through the placement of bat boxes in the park. A suggestion was made that we could scout for areas that might be best for the placement of the bat houses during our April visit mentioned in L (e).

P. Adjourn

Corresponding Secretary, Janet Schoenmeyer

Next meeting – May 15, 2025 – 5pm at Marshall PSB