PRAS BOARD MEETING

December 11, 2020

The virtual meeting was called to order by president, Ron Mills at 6:30 pm. The following board members were present on Zoom: Mike Krzyzkowski, Vikki Carpenter, Sandy Artman, Rob Mills, Brenda Curtis, Phyllis Cady, and Sandra Kaiser. Also present was member Tony Licata. Roll call indicated a quorum was present.

There were no additions are changes to the meeting agenda.

Treasurer, Sandy Artman stated that the $2,500 new grant had been deposited but no invoices have been received. Brenda Curtis said that planning for the booklet, Plants for Birds has begun and invoices for printing will probably be forthcoming in February 2021. Sandy also stated that the old grant, butterfly gardens and yard certification, has a small balance. Through discussion it was decided to buy more plants for the butterfly garden and charge weeds removal to the remaining balance.

Without further discussion, a motion to approve the Minutes from October 30, 2020, the current Treasurer’s Report and Membership reports were seconded and unanimously approved by the Board.

OLD BUSINESS

Christmas Bird Count - Tony Licata is still looking for volunteers for the December 19th count. The event has lost some volunteer coordinators and the count will be more difficult because of the corona virus limitations. People can still watch from their own yards and feeders and report the numbers. CHNEP including Ponce de Leon and Vivante, count proposal is set, Twin Isles and Babcock also participating.

Programs/Field Trips - Board members commented that Ollies Pond and Station 5/6 field trips in November were successful utilizing new social protocols.

Mike K. announced the January 26, 2021 virtual program will be on Swallow-tailed kites. Reinier Munguia is still booked for the webinars on April 20, 2021 – topic: Raptors/Predators of the Sky and May 18, 2021 - topic: Owls, the Silent Hunter. Ron and Mike will set up the webinars and get with Sandy to send check for the speaker fee. The webinars will be recorded.

Rob Mills stated that due to Covid 19 he has put the pursuit of personal guide activities on hold. This can be revisited in 2021.

Membership - Phyllis Cady indicated that membership went from 412 to 433 this month with 10 new national members. Dues collection is still down, probably because of non in-person meetings. A second notice for payment has been sent out. 5 people paid online through PayPal and 2 sent in checks this month. Thank you letters are sent when dues are paid.

FPL Grants - Brenda shared that she was meeting tomorrow with Linda to coordinate and develop the first draft for the booklet, Plants for Birds. She hopes to have the booklet ready for print in January. There is another FPL grant cycle in April 2021 which might provide additional funds for printing. If no additional resources are available, we may just do one printing.
Rob Mills shared that there are 3 new locations that have native plants to qualify for the yard certification program: 1. Sweet Bay Nursery in Parrish, Manatee County; 2. Florida Native Plant Society in Ft. Myers; and 3. CHEC on Burnt Store Road in Charlotte County. The new CEO for CHEC is interested in working with PRAS on the program.

Rob also mentioned that Keep Florida Beautiful has $500 individual grants for butterfly and native plant gardens and can collaborate with other programs.

Photo Contest - Brenda said some ideas are still in the talking phase. She will continue to pursue after the holidays. Ron Mills mentioned that maybe we can dovetail the contest with the banquet and fund raising.

Conservation Priorities 2020-2021 - Brenda said the priorities are on the website and she sent them in an email report to the PRAS Board. She and Ron asked the Board members to review, provide input and vote on the priorities at the next Board meeting.

NEW BUSINESS

Banquet/Fund Raising Ideas – Ron Mills sent some ideas in an email attachment to Board members. The Banquet fundraiser will be virtual in 2021 due to Covid 19 restrictions and precautions. Brenda suggested that photos for the photo contest can be online for bid. Winners can be selected before the night of the auction and announced that night. Phyllis will ask Sue and Sandra for volunteer assistance in the publicity. Mike volunteered to work on the live webinar. Native plants were suggested as prizes.

Date suggested for event was the third Thursday in March which is March 18, 2021.

It was also noted that there will not be another regional Giving Challenge until 2022.

Shore Bird Volunteer Request (T.Dallas/FWC) – Ron and Phyllis sent an email blast and posted on the website.

Ron Mills also stated he gets email requests for PRAS to assist with the protection of Burrowing Owls and other birds. Rob M. said he would check to see if there were any county or state regulations regarding. Ron M. will draft a flyer/sign on bird etiquette and ethics for the Board review. Vikki, Rob & Ron agreed to work with Charlotte County for approval and printing. PRAS can also work with the County to help educate homeowners.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Bird Blind – Mike K. and Cindi M. still volunteer to maintain the bird blind at CHEC. Two new volunteers have been recruited to assist. Mike stated that there has been some recent rodent infestation in the eaves, and he will take care of. There is also an active bees’ nest to contend with.

Conservation – Brenda re-iterated that she sent out the report of 2020-21 priorities to the board members for review and future discussion. She shared that she had attended the 11/10/20 virtual meeting of the Everglades Coalition. Discussion had included Okeechobee equity, climate resiliency and justice. She mentioned that counties shared innovative programs in place. Sarasota takes people on a walk to show the impact of climate change. Other topics included SFWMD water programs, invasive species, feeder watch programs, eagle watch and edible plants. Brenda announced that the
next Coalition meeting is scheduled for February 2-5, 2021. People who want to participate can now register online. $75.00 registration fee before January 8th and $100.00 after that date.

**Publicity** – Ron Mills commented that the new website looks great with the update. Other Board members concurred. Phyllis and Sandra are working together to coordinate website, publications and newspaper announcement/articles. Phyllis asked that other member writeups be sent to both her and Sandra.

**Scholarships** – Vikki mentioned that there was no new information from Gregg Klowden or the committee at this time. She will reach back out to Gregg after the holidays to check on the status of the application process.

**Pennington Audubon Park** – Rob M. stated that there had been some vandalism at the park, but it has been fixed with new paint and the hole patched. He also added that members Larry and Patti Linn have been painting butterflies to enhance the beauty of the park.

**OPEN FORUM**

There were no additional comments during Open Forum, so President Ron Mills adjourned the meeting at 8:20 pm. Next meeting in January 2021 will be conducted via Zoom. Ron will send notification, date TBD.

Respectfully Submitted,

Vikki Carpenter, Secretary