PRAS BOARD MEETING

May 13, 2021

The virtual meeting was called to order by Acting President, Mike Krzyzkowski at 7:00 pm. The following board members were also present on Zoom: Vikki Carpenter, Sandy Artman, Rob Mills, Brenda Curtis, Phyllis Cady, Sandra Kaiser, Cindy Macri, Sue French and Nancy Leipold.

Roll call indicated a quorum was present for this evening’s meeting.

Agenda, Minutes from April 14, 2021 and the Treasurer’s report were sent to the Board prior to tonight’s meeting. A motion was made and seconded to approve the agenda and minutes.

Sandy Artman presented and commented on the Treasurer’s report. PRAS has received $2,000. toward the Ron Mills scholarship fund. $1,800 has been sent to CHEC for camp scholarships. Rent to First Alliance Church has been sent for next year’s meetings. $8,000 remains in the operating budget.

After no further discussion, a motion was made and seconded to accept the Treasurer’s report.

OLD BUSINESS:

Website – Sandra K. reported that both the upcoming Owl presentation (via zoom) and the election of officers were posted to PRAS members. Phyllis stated that a donation of $250 from Kathleen Rohrer was received praising Brenda’s Plants for Birds activity book. Praise was also extended to PRAS for the self-directed walks during the pandemic.

Plants for Birds Book – Brenda said she has a couple of boxes left. She just distributed 75 books to the Charter School for their summer camp program. Brenda is looking into PDF publication of the activity book for downloading on the internet and is checking with other Audubon chapters. Brenda stated that FPL has released the copy rights.

Wildlife Viewing Signs – Vikki reported that she has picked up the four signs from C & R printers. She thought they turned out nice. PRAS will need to get posts to install the signs at the two parks, Kiwanis and Ollie’s Pond and is looking for member volunteers. Rob Mills said he would assist and asked that Vikki get more information from the County on the installation process and approval, including the use of cement.

Ron Mills Passage/Memorial - Sandy said there was nothing new to report at this time.

Nominating Committee for 2021-2022- Sandra said she sent out notification of nominations for officers and directors for next year to the PRAS membership last week. Mike stated that since we are conducting the election virtually, we will wait another 10 days for finalizing the election of officers and directors. New Board will be effective for the start of the new PRAS year in September 2021 and terms will run through May in 2022.
**Bird-a-Thon** - Sandy A. reported that only a few members participated this year, per Cathy Olson, chair of the event. Board discussed keeping the same format for next year, enhancing the publicity of the event and conducting the event earlier, perhaps in April, since May was a little late for both bird migration and some member participants who may have already returned to more northern residences. The Board also felt that the Covid restrictions may have prevented some people from participating this year.

**Earth Day at CHEC** - Phyllis reported that the event was a success and thanked all the board members who volunteered. PRAS had an opportunity to provide outreach, information and demonstrations. Board members discussed future event/festival opportunities and the possibility of having a committee chair and committee members. Sandra K. she would be willing to work on this with additional volunteers. Several Board members offered to participate. Rob M. said a pro-active approach to participation could include looking at community calendars and planning upcoming events. PRAS member, Larry Behrens, might be a good resource to assist.

**NEW BUSINESS:**

**Stock Donation from Beth and Mike Richter** - Sandy initiated this discussion by sharing that an offer from Beth and Mark Richter to donate stocks to PRAS has been received. Sandy indicated that PRAS would need to upgrade our current stock account. A new account could be set up with Vanguard Brokerage and all assets would be transferred from our old account. New account will need two signature authorities. Motion was made by Mike Krzyzkowski and seconded by Susan French to appoint Sandy Artman and Brenda Curtis as signature authority for all PRAS stock accounts. Motion was unanimously approved by all Board members present. Sandy will follow up with the Richters and with Vanguard. The Finance Committee will set up a meeting for later this summer/fall.

**Bird Blind Funding Request from CHEC** - Mike K. spoke with the CHEC CEO, Mike Bednar, who sent a funding request proposal to PRAS for renovations to the Bird Blind. Mike K. sent the proposal to PRAS Board members in an earlier email for discussion at tonight’s meeting. Members discussed the proposal. $3,600 has been sent to CHEC this year for summer camp scholarships. $1,800 were designated funds from the Ron Mills scholarship account and $1,800 were from general funds as budgeted this year for this expense. It was decided that the $1,800 from the Ron Mills scholarship donations should remain earmarked for camp scholarships. If CHEC cannot use all the funds this year due to low enrollment, then the balance remaining should be rolled over to next year’s scholarship funding cycle. The remaining funds from the general budget (of $1,800) can be used toward renovations. The Board asked for specific cost estimates from CHEC for their renovation proposal and asked Mike K. to communicate this to CHEC before approving the reallocation of the funds. The Board also asked for an accounting of funds spent on scholarships.

Vikki commented that since there are planned major renovations to the bird blind, she has recommended placing a hold on making a dedicated Ron Mills bird blind building sign until after the renovations.

Some discussion also ensued on native plants at the bird blind. Mike K. and Rob M. both confirmed that some plants do not do well in this environment. There is also no established irrigation system.
Banquet discussion for next year- Mike asked if PRAS wanted to have a banquet in 2022. The banquet is a social, educational (speaker) and fundraising event. The 2020 banquet was cancelled due to the pandemic and a 2021 event was not planned for similar concerns. The banquet has traditionally been held in March each year. If PRAS wants to sponsor a banquet in 2022, planning should probably begin this summer. Sandra K. and Sue French said they would help coordinate with other volunteers. (Julie Black coordinated prior banquet and is a good resource for information). Vikki and Mike mentioned they are holding on to gift cards (from cancelled 2020 banquet) for a future event.

COMMITTEE REPORTS:

Membership- Phyllis reported that there are 460 current members. (Updated report May 14, 2021 to 455 members)

Conservation – Brenda C. sent the Board the conservation report in an earlier email. There were lots of activities taking place including a recent legislative wrap up on climate change and resiliency. Water control, rising heat (temperatures) and hurricanes all impact Southwest Florida. There is a steering committee in formation to try and address these issues. Charlotte, Lee and Collier counties have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to support the need to consider actions and solutions and utilize available funding. Brenda encouraged members to educate themselves on the issues as presented in the information that was sent in an internet site link.

Programs – Mike K. is looking for speakers for next year. Please send him any ideas and contact information. He is also looking for a co-chair to assist with this committee. Brenda C. said she would look through some of the speakers’ information that she has gathered from her conservation conferences, workshops and activities.

Bird Blind - Mike K. said the pump has been replaced. Sue F. will get the planters and feeders. The Blind is scheduled to close for the summer on May 26th.

Field Trips – No Report

Audubon Pennington Park – Cindy M. said she contacted the County who stated that no cameras, posts or any previously discussed security measures would be authorized based on liability issues. Cindy also mentioned that Rob M. and Larry Lin did a great job clearing downed trees from the trails. Patti Lin continues to touch up the paint on the signs.

CHEC - No report

Scholarship – No report. Vikki reminded the Board that Gregg Klowden, Scholarship Chair, had communicated that he was going to work on the application process over the summer.

Yard Certification/Plants for Birds – Rob stated the Punta Gorda Boat Club has earned their certification. Rob donated a concrete bird bath (of his making) to Larry Behrens for the garden at the Boat Club. Port Charlotte Library is finished with their project and is waiting for the $20 application fee. They will probably get funds from the Friends of the Library volunteers.

Rob also stated that Volusia County Audubon has contacted him regarding our yard certification program. Rob is pleased that Audubon chapters can work and share project information.
**OPEN FORUM:**

Rob shared that from 6/12-6/20 Charlotte County residents can use their library cards for entrance to the Naples Botanical Gardens. (Worth the trip).

Mike K. asked the Board if future directors’ meetings could be moved to the first Thursday of each month beginning in September. Pete Quasius has requested this consideration since he has an ongoing conflict with the second Thursday of the month. Board members agreed to the change of date. Meetings will still be held virtually from 7-8:30 pm.

Mike also stated he will be back in touch with the Board with a date for a summer planning meeting in July or August.

After no further discussion, Acting President Mike Krzyzkowski adjourned the meeting at 8:45 pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

Vikki Carpenter, Secretary

Safe summer travels to all!