Peace River Audubon Society/Board Meeting

Summer Planning Meeting Minutes

July 15, 2021

Board members present: Sandy Artman, Phyllis Syme Cady, Brenda Curtis, Sandra Kaiser, Mike Krzyzkowski, Rob Mills, Nancy Leipold, Pete Quasius. Sue French joined at 7:30 P.M.

Mike K. declared a quorum present and the Zoom meeting began at 7:02 P.M.

There were no additions to the distributed agenda.

Minutes

Motion to approve minutes from last meeting was made by Brenda Curtis and seconded by Pete Quasius. This motion was approved unanimously.

Treasury

Sandy Artman stated there was no report. She will have a treasurer’s report for the meeting in September. For general information, she is investigating different insurance companies to compare rates. She will include this information in future reports.

Sue French had been trying for many minutes to get into meeting.

Field Trips/Walkabouts

Rob Mills reported that the schedule for the field trips and walkabouts is a work in progress. Half of the 14 slots are filled. The email that was sent out to members asking for volunteers to lead field trips or walkabouts resulted in no responses. It was suggested that the date for the Birdathon either be March 19 or March 26, 2022. Sandy suggested that the Birdathon could be made a field trip. The PRAS banquet’s date is March 24th, 2022. Pete said that he would contact Bill Hammond at Babcock Webb and ask for people to volunteer and he would get back to Rob. Rob said that he contacted volunteers from last year and everybody had a very good reason that they could not lead this year. For example, getting older and moving out of town.

Rob reminded that people who want to volunteer usually select the place they feel comfortable leading a group. It was suggested that Rob contact CHEC and see if they have some people who would volunteer to lead trips for PRAS. It was also suggested to offer a birding focused kayak trip as a “walkabout”. Jamie Reynolds who has lead kayak trips for the Sierra Club was mentioned as a possible person to lead a trip.

Sue French joined the meeting on zoom.

Rick Field was also mentioned as a potential leader. Margaret Dunson’s name was also suggested as a potential leader and as someone who would be a good resource for birders to lead trips.

Mike suggested that a form letter could be sent out with dates available and asking who would be willing to lead a trip. Phylliss asked Rob if his program for yard certification for native plants could provide a place for a field trip or walkabout. He suggested that a very large property
might work for this. Brenda Curtis suggested that maybe several properties where people could travel between and look at birds would also work.

Rob stated that many PRAS members state they are not confident enough to lead a trip. They know the parks but do not want to lead a trip because they are not confident in their knowledge of birds. Sandy suggested that the Birdathon in March be shared with Southwest Florida Audubon.

Phyllis stated that Abby Banks is a new member of the group and that Ron should get in touch with her for her contact list. Mike suggested that maybe Abby Banks would be a good member for Ron’s committee.

Brenda asked to look at the dates. Ron said that he would send out the schedule to the board so they would know what dates are available. Ron stated that the dates he is signed up for can be changed. There was discussion that the business that publishes the brochure is very good with editing and updated and can work rather quickly because most of the brochure is similar from year to year.

Annual Banquet Report

Sandra Kaiser reported that the program schedule is set. The correct date for the banquet is March 24, 2022. Sandra thanked Mike for getting a speaker. Charles Sobczak will be speaking on ‘Covid Chernobyl and Rewilding Our World.” Sandra stated that the Twin Isles County Club is under new management. Their initial fee for the banquet was quoted as $500 then reduced for a non-profit to $250. In addition, if more than 50 people attended the banquet then the fee would be $100.00 It was stated that we usually have 80-150 people attend the banquet.

The March 24, 2020 date was secured. Ticket price for attending the banquet will be $40.00 but will be reduced to $35.00 if purchased early. Sandra was not certain how the reduction in Twin Isles Golf Club rates based on people attending would work, but will look into this. Phyllis offered the suggestion that people who have been on the banquet committee in the past, may help her and share their knowledge with her. In the past, Ron has created center pieces but Twin Isles did inform Sandra that they have center pieces we could use if we wanted.

Sue French offered to help with the banquet. Mike stated that the banquet is a good time!

Signs

Mike shared that Vikki reported that the viewing signs are completed and installed at both parks.

Mosaic Follow-up

DeSoto county has the ability to zone property to allow it to be mined by Mosaic. Pete attended a zoning committee meeting in DeSoto County. He reported there was community opposition for the county commissioners to approve the zoning change. In the past, the DeSoto commissioners rejected Mosaic’s application for a zoning change. He suggested that Audubon Florida and Southwest Audubon would be supportive of not approving the zoning change but will not take any action regarding their position. Pete said that if the zoning change is not approved, legal action by Mosaic would probably occur. The proposed mining site is close to
Horse Creek, Peace River and Charlotte Harbor. He reminded board members that Mosaic has lots of money to lobby for their position. Pete stated that Mosaic says that there will be no damage to the environment from their mining business, but there is no technology to support their position. Pete said that it is very important when dealing with Mosaic to be aware not only on what they say but also what they don’t say. Pete said this is a work in progress.

Technology problems caused Brenda Curtis to leave meeting. She joined meeting again on phone though Mike’s zoom. She stated that the DeSoto commissioners need to be educated about the effect on ground water of Mosaic mining. She stated that they will need to be supported for the legal fight to come. What is needed is outside help. She suggested what is needed is a well-funded NGO to come in and help. She reiterated that DeSoto county voted this petition to mine down in 2018. Brenda stated that the commissioners could vote this down again.

**Charlotte County Scrub Jay Issues**

Scrub jay habitat needs to be burned every five years. If habitat is near relatively developed areas it is not burned. Pete stated that scrub jays need at least 1000 acres to sustain a scrub jay population. There is a large tract of land that could be purchased by Charolotte county but it would take 5 years to develop it to support scrub jays. It was stated that Charlotte County is under a settlement agreement to provide scrub jay habitat. This is again a work in progress.

Brenda Curtis stated this is not a coordinated effort between the Federal, State and County to get this done. It is very difficult to relocate scrub jays. Maybe the county will have to look outside of the county. Since Brenda was on the phone through Mike Z zoom it was difficult for all the board to hear her. Brenda will send out an email to board members regarding this topic. Pete stated that feral cats are a problem as well as they kill so many birds. He also stated that Charlotte county has to abide by their settlement agreement. This is a work in progress.

**Bequests---Stock Donations to PRAS**

Sandy Artman described her activities regarding applications to create proper accounts for PRAS to accept stock donations. In August, she should have the applications complete and the proper signatories. Once this process is complete, it does not have to be repeated. The organization can accept additional stock donations in the future.

A question arose, Should we add the information that the organization can accept stock donations on our membership brochure? Mike asked what do we do with the stock? What would we do if we have real estate donated?

Pete related that in his past experience real estate parcels that were donated to Audubon Southwest was transferred to Florida Audubon who managed and maintained the property.

Mike stated that he seems to remember there was property in Arcadia that was donated to Peace River Audubon Society. There was discussion about finding out more about this. There may be information in the safety deposit box. Documents pertaining to the formation of the Peace River Audubon Society are in the safety deposit box. Rob asked if we need to pay taxes on this property? There was general discussion that we need to look into this. Mike K. volunteered to look into this real estate donation to PRAS.
Since these fiduciary accounts are being created, there was general discussion about the organization soliciting bequests. Should we ask for real estate parcel requests? Should be look at people donated vehicles: “Cars for Birds?” Mike reminded the board that we have a finance committee and suggested that this would be a good topic for that committee. It was suggested that the finance committee consider putting requests for bequests on the website and our brochure.

**Bird Blind Replacement at CHEC**

CHEC was in the process of fixing the bird blind at CHEC and discovered that it is not worth fixing and needs to be replaced. They sent a proposal to the board which was shared with the board members via email. CHEC wanted the board to approve their proposal that a mental shed be purchased. There was general agreement that the blind should be replaced and be critter proof and water proof. There was general discussion about how one would retrofit a window into this mental shed. Pete suggested that they might be professionally designed bird blinds that we should research. It was decided that we would spend some time researching before we would commit to CHEC proposal regarding the blind.

Brenda Curtis suggested that the blind could possibly be relocated to view water and potential water birds. The question would become where to locate? Mike K stated that the position of the blind is good. There are lots of birds at the bird blind. He then described various methods and ways that have been devised to keep hogs away and the use of 78 records on wires to discourage squirrels. Aluminum flashing had been put around the trees to discourage raccoons. He stated that the present site for the blind is the only really good site at CHEC. Mike K. reminded the board that the blind is closed in the rainy season because the trails flood. After general discussion the board decided not to take any action on the CHEC proposal. It was agreed that we need more information on what CHEC had in mind for the design. We need to investigate other alternatives.

Sue French asked if their price included putting in a window in the mental shed.? Sue French agreed that the position of the blind is perfect.

Mike K will talk to Mike at CHEC and share the concerns of the board. There are too many unknowns yet to make a decision. We need information on construction details. Could we possible have one way glass? Mike K stated that won’t do anything in the rainy season and probably will take 6-9-12 months to complete this project. This is a work in progress.

Rob Mills related his experience meeting a possible donor at Pennington Park. This potential donor says that he likes to give money to non-profits. This donor owns companies in North Port. Rob Mills will contact him about the bird blind. Maybe this donor will cover the cost of the bird blind.

**Memorial for Ron Mills**

Sandy had a preliminary discussion with the Navigator to host an event at their restaurant to honor Ron Mills. She will discuss this again in July and try to get a date for this year’s brochure.

Ron Mills Plaque for the door of the blind was delayed because of the status of the blind.
**Additional Discussion**

Brenda  talked about a program that offered leadership to younger people who are interested in Audubon. The quality of sound was very poor and she said she would send out more information per email for the board to review.

Sandy not sure about the date for the Giving Challenge. This will be determined at a later date.

Rob  agreed  to send out information on field trips and walkabouts  to board members, so they can help fill in the spots needed.

Sandra  asked if there was a budget for the banquet.  There was general discussion that the banquet itself covered the expenses. It breaks even and is not intended to make money. Money comes from the auction donations.

Mike  stated that he would invite Mike from CHEC to attend our next board meeting in September to answer questions and discuss the bird blind.

There was discussion on when items needed to be provided for the brochure. When items are ready, for example the speaker schedule of the field trips and walkabouts, this information can be sent to Larry at C &R Graphic. It was stated that Larry has the template and can just insert information when it is ready.

Rob stated he could pick up completed materials  from the printer, since the printer was near his house.

Meeting ended at 8:29 P.M.

Nancy Leipold, temporary minute taker