Peace River Audubon Society Board Meeting
August 10, 2021

Board Members in attendance on Zoom: Sandy Artman, Phyllis Cady, Brenda Curtis, Mike Krzyskowski, Nancy Leipold, Rob Mills, Peter Quasius

Guest: Mike Bednar, CHEC

A quorum was established by Mike K. and the meeting began at 7:03 P.M.

Pete Q. made a motion to accept July 15, 2021 meeting PRAS board meeting minutes as distributed by email. Phyllis C. seconded. The motion carried unanimously.

**Treasurer’s Report**

Sandy A. reported three separate items. The Bird-a-thon monies come in and out with the team leaders designating where the monies go. Phyllis is in charge of the scholarship fund. Kathy is in charge of the CHEC education fund. Sandy A. reported that she paid the safety deposit box fee. PRAS received $5.00 from Amazon Smile program. Sandy A. said that she rolled the rest of the money in Brenda’s brochure account into the education fund. Sandy recommended that we transfer the monies in the butterfly garden account because there has not been any activity in the account. Rob Mills stated that he wanted to buy some more plants for the butterfly garden, stated that some of the plants in the garden are getting a little tired. Sandy A. stated that there is $965.00 in the scholarship fund.

Bren brought up her concern about the lack of details CHEC’s provides for the use of the monies from the scholarship fund. She would like an accounting of how the funds were used. Mike Bednar stated that quite a few students got scholarships to attend CHEC summer camps. Mike stated that many students rely on the scholarships to attend camp. Bren requested that we get a detailed report on how many students attend camp on scholarship. Mike Bednar then described how limited camps were 2020 summer because of covid and CHEC’s plan for summer camp next year. He described how the students are selected for 100% scholarships or 50% scholarships based on the parent’s income. Mike stated that he would supply PRAS with a detailed report on how CHEC uses the scholarships.

Pete Q. made a motion to accept the Treasurer’s report. Bren C. seconded. The motion was accepted unanimously.

**Bird Blind Refurbishment at CHEC – Mike Bednar**

There was an addendum to the agenda that was a proposal from CHEC that quoted a proposal from South West Sheds for a total of $5476.92

Mike B. stated that he researched a variety of bird blinds. He believes that an enclosed bird blind is important. He looked into shipping containers to be modified for a bird blind and rejected shipping containers because of their costs, their modification costs for windows and doors, total weight and difficulty of placing them on a site at CHEC. He reiterated the opinion of the volunteer contractor who attempted to repair the current blind that because of pest damage and water damage the blind needs to be replaced. He then explained the proposal from South
West Sheds. He stated that the blind is pre-fabricated, would be delivered complete, and would have a metal door that locks. The interiors would have rolled aluminum supports with no enclosed walls for pests to hide. It would withstand 170 MPH winds. This shed has a peaked roof. We could make arrangements to have a pre-bought window installed at the manufacturing site. This shed would be wired for electricity and installed on a platform 18-20 inches off the ground. Mike K. asked about roof gutters in order to keep the cistern system full. Can the shed be modified to collect rain water to keep the pool filled? Mike responded all things are possible. He stated that the larger building that he is proposing, 10 feet by 12 feet, would have similar amount of runoff water from rain as the current blind. He stated that the cistern runs dry this year and wondered if there was a leak. There was discussion about the cistern and water feature and possibly sealing the concrete water trough.

Mike stated that the bird blind is a wonderful feature at CHEC. He is very invested to make sure that the bird blind lives on at CHEC. He suggested that the bird blind is step one and a water feature discussion is step 2. He stated he would really like to get the bird blind complete and in place by November 2021. He then stated that there is already $1800 reserved for the bird blind in the Ron Mills memorial fund but this amount will not be sufficient. A total amount of $5000 would make it possible. Mike B. stated that CHEC could possible give $1000 to the project, but he would have to go to the CHEC board to get approval of this amount. He also discussed that CHEC has a possibility of future grants and that maybe PRAS could front some of the money for the bird blind.

Mike then talked about another place at CHEC where he suggested would be a good place for a bird blind, but not an enclosed one. He described a trail, the Lewis trail, near an eagle nest and near a flooded pasture. He thought this would be a wonderful place to observe water birds.

Bren C. then suggested that maybe this secondary location would be a very good place to relocate the bird blind under discussion. She stated that the present location of the bird blind leads to rats and grackles. She would like to suggest that the bird blind be placed where the bird watchers could see water birds. Mike K. suggested that that are going to be grackles whenever one goes.

Mike B. replied that the second location he is referring to would be inaccessible to the delivery of a pre-fabricated bird blind. Anything that has to be delivered to this spot would either have to be hand delivered or by a UTV. He stated that he was thinking along the lines of a boardwalk with a platform at the end with a wall with holes to look through, like a duck blind.

Based on the $2000 that CHEC has from the memorial fund, and the potential $1000 from the CHEC board, Mike B. was asking for $2200 from PRAS to complete the funds for the proposed bird blind.

Rob M. asked how many quotes was CHEC going to get before determining the cost and manufacture of the shed?

Mike B. stated that he was planning on at least getting three quotes, one of them is the South West Sheds quote that he sent to the board. He suggested that possible Tamper Sheds would be another. Pete Q. suggested that maybe the big-box hardware stores might have a good
price. Mike K. brought up the importance of the large viewing window being installed in the bird blind and that this might be a possible problem for a big box hardware store shed.

Rob M. reminded us all about the person that he met who was interested in contributing to a non-profit. Maybe he could fund the bird blind?

Mike B. stated that she would like to have a bird blind in place by November. He reiterated that he would send a detailed report to PRAS about CHEC’s use of the scholarship fund.

Mike K. thanked Mike B for coming to the meeting and then Mike B. left the zoom meeting.

Discussion then ensued about this bird blind proposal.

Pete Q stated that he support the idea of a partnership with CHEC regarding the bird blind. He thought we should be 50/50 partnership with CHEC regarding the monies. He also talked about the presence of bird seed feeders sickening birds. He is using flax seeds and suet for attracting birds. He suggested planting plants that will attract birds instead of bird seed. He thinks the timeline of completion by November is unrealistic.

There was discussion about how much expertise is needed to modify a metal shed.

There was discussion about how much money does PRAS want to put into this project? Bren C. suggested the idea of a joint fund raiser. She suggested that PRAS could front the money for the blind. Mike K. stated that fronting the money would not be a problem.

Pete Q. suggested that maybe we could have a metal donation box at the blind to raise some funds. Mike K. stated that items near the blind are risky. Binoculars that were chained down disappeared. If we have a donation box Mike K suggested that it be located at CHEC front office.

Sandy A. stated that the blind is a PRAS project and has no problem with providing the funds for the construction of the blind. Nancy L. agreed.

Mike K. clarified that the additional amount that PRAS would need to give would be, base on the South West Sheds proposal, $2700.

Rob Mills stated some concern about non profits having a lot of money saved and not spending it. He stated that PRAS has the money to support this proposal.

Sandy A. stated that this bird blind is our “baby” on their (CHEC) property and that we should fund it and make sure it happens. There was discussion about the number of children, all 6th graders in Charlotte county, who go to CHEC and visit the bird blind annually. If we what to encourage young people to get into birding this is a very good way to do it. It was stated that CHEC is a large NGO and could support this project.

Mike K. stated that PRAS has planted plants to attract the bird at the present bird blind location but they died because of lack of water.

Phyllis stated that she has hear all the discussion, and the bird blind was a PRAS project and has always been. She suggests we fund it and work with CHEC.
Pete Q. moved that PRAS support the bird blind project in the amount not to exceed $3000 and there should be several quotes for the bird blind. Rob M. seconded the motion. Bren C. commented that PRAS would need to have someone at CHEC to make sure that the bird blind is done correctly. PRAS would need agreement on the design. Mike K. stated that in his opinion because of the relationship with Mike B. is a very moral and ethical person that he trusts.

The vote to approve the motion was unanimous.

Mike K. reminded everyone that he would be out of town August 20-27th.

**General meetings of PRAS – Field trips and Walk-abouts**

Mike K. brought up this concern regarding the spread of covid in the state: what should we do about meeting in person at PRAS meetings? He asked should me meet in person or continue with zoom meetings?. There was discussion about what to do. It would be difficult to require vaccinations and monitor vaccination status. Nancy L. stated that if she was in Florida right now she would not attend in person. Pete Q. agreed. The general consensus was to continue zoom meetings this fall and revisit this idea for January 2022. Sandy A. stated she will contact the church and let them know and see what the financial aspects of this decision are.

Phyllis asked what about the field trips and walk-abouts? There was general consensus that we will continue with these activities, asking people to mask and social distance as we have been doing.

Pete Q. asked about the Christmas bird count and again there was general consensus that the Christmas bird count be conducted like it was in 2020. It is better to be safe than sorry.

Mike K. compliments Rob M. are the good job he is doing organizing the field trips. Kayak trips are now being included. Rob M. stated that CHEC is not going to do kayak trips anymore. Rob M. stated that Nick, the person he contacted to lead kayak trips for PRAS, will rent kayaks for $35 a trip. If he guides the trip the fee is $55. But Rob M. said that Nick has agreed, if 6 or more people go on a guided trip and rent kayaks, he will reduce his fee to $35. Participants can bring their own kayaks to these field trips.

Sandy A. asked if the field trips will be in the brochure. Rob M. says Larry is ready to make brochures. Rob M. will make sure field trip information gets to Larry. Mike K will be responsible to get speaker information to Larry.

Rob M. discusses his successful attempt to list the field trips and on the website “Eventbrite”. People can sign up for our field trips on Eventbrite. He stated that he will make a link from Eventbrite to PRAS Facebook page. He also stated that on the PRAS website there is an error. It states that all trips by PRAS are conducted by a PRAS member and a county master naturalist. This is not the case and suggested that it be corrected. Phyllis stated she would look into this and correct it.

Bren C. asked if people are still signing liability forms for field trips. Phyllis said that yes this is continuing. Sandy A. is pricing another insurance company to compare prices.
Annual Banquet

Sandra K. reported that she has met with Phyllis and Sandy, sharing materials and is going through the materials to set up a guide. She reported that she already has 10 volunteers for the banquet. Phyllis discussed sending a letter to some of the people who have volunteered in the past to see if they will help this year. Sandra wondered if online registration has been considered. There was discussion about fees regarding this idea. There was no opposition to Sandy A. continuing with the current process of registration. Bren C. asked what are we raffling off at the banquet. Mike K. stated that he had several gift certificates from local restaurants from last year who will honor them. Mike K. praised Sandra K doing a great job so far.

Mosaic Followup

Pete Q. stated that nothing is happening right now. Bren C. reported results from a webinar on Piney Point status. She reported a personal experience on Manasota Key and testified to the results of red tide: hundreds and hundreds of dead fish. She stated she would try and send out links to this webinar.

Stock Donations

Sandy A. reported that she is getting closer to having the entire process complete.

Ron Mills Memorial at Navigator

Sandy A. called the Navigator and they agreed that PRAS could come to the restaurant and raise money any way we want. The best time is during the week. She suggested that we might have a musician play and get some items from Toby Mills and auction them. We could advertise this event but we can’t restrict the restaurant just to our use. Mike K. asked would we make any money from this? There was some discussion about the original intent of this memorial was to get people to the Navigator and enjoy Ron’s artwork. Mike K. suggested that we do not make it a fundraiser and just have a memorial. Sandy A. will talk to Toby about the Navigator memorial.

Mike K. stated that Toby Mills is putting her house of for sale and is having a yard sale. There was discussion about a ganoe and trailer that Toby would donate to PRAS. Pete Q stated that the ganoe with trailer might be a great raffle prize at the annual banquet. There was discussion that the Ganoe with trailer could be sold for a lot more than what a raffle would bring in. Mike K was going to go and see the ganoe with trailer and take photos to put on line for sale. Latest proposal is that Toby will donate the ganoe and trailer to PRAS. After the sale. PRAS keep the funds.

Giving Challenge

Sandy A. stated there is no report

Old Business
Regarding a question that occurred at the July meeting regarding a parcel of land donated to PRAS, Mike K. clarified. He stated that this property of several acres was sold several years ago for $94,000 and the money went to Audubon of Florida.

**Committee Reports**

There were no committee reports.

Bren C. stated that she would make a conservation report after the meeting.

**Additional actions**

Phyllis C. moved that the money raised by selling Ron Mills canoe and trailer be the money that goes towards building the bird blind at CHEC. Pete Q. seconded this motion. This motion passed unanimously.

Rob M. asked if the insurance company that we use for liability on field trips and walkabouts is still Sports. Sandy A. replied yes and although she is attempting to get another insurance quote, the additional company is not responding promptly.

Sandy A. stated that we all want to make sure that there is a memorial plaque at the bird blind for Ron Mills.

Mike K. stated Toby Mills has not set a date for the yard sale.

Pete Q. stated that a quick check on the internet resulted in a potential sale for the canoe is between $4000 and $8000, depending on the condition of the boat.

Pete Q. made a motion to adjourn meeting. Bren C. seconded. The meeting adjourned at 8:43 P.M.

Nancy Leipold, interim secretary.