PRAS BOARD MEETING

November 9, 2021

The virtual meeting was called to order by Co-President, Mike Krzyzkowski at 7:05 pm. The following board members were also present on Zoom: Brenda Curtis, Vikki Carpenter, Rob Mills, Phyllis Cady, Kerry Bowers, Pete Quasius, Sue French and Nancy Leipold.

Roll call indicated a quorum was present for the meeting.

A motion was made and seconded to approve the November 9, 2021 Agenda and the Minutes from October 12, 2021.

Treasurer, Sandy Artman, was not present for the meeting tonight and the Treasurer’s report was postponed until the next meeting in December.

OLD BUSINESS:

CHEC Blind Update - Mike K. stated he had sent pictures to the Board from CHEC showing the progress of the demolition of the Bird Blind. He will send others once the demolition is complete.

Zoom Issues - Mike K. said there were still some issues during Holley Short’s Zoom presentation on Nesting Shore Birds. Holley could not share her screen as host or co-host. It was suggested that Holley’s settings may have needed to be re-set. Mike admitted that the Zoom issues are a work in progress. He and Sue French will continue to test Zoom usage and Mike might also get the assistance of a computer tech who attends his church.

Giving Challenge 2022/Budget Review - Rob M. stated that there will be a meeting on November 15th that he and Sandy A. will attend regarding next year’s Challenge. He also shared that PRAS status was active and ready to go.

Further discussion on the giving challenge and the budget review was tabled until the December meeting since Sandy A. was not present.

Bylaws Committee Update - Brenda C. sent an email to the PRAS Board members with some proposed changes to the bylaws in a suggested format. Nancy L. will re-write a portion of the bylaws which will add Co-Presidents. Pete Q. stated that he would like to add Zoom and other electronic communications as acceptable means of conducting PRAS business. The Committee (Brenda, Pete, Sue and Nancy) is also working on language which will discuss absenteeism of Board members. The proposed bylaw changes will be brought to the Board at the December meeting for a vote.

Plants for Birds Grant - Rob M. said there is a meeting scheduled for the week of Thanksgiving. He will be meeting with Ralph Mitchell of the County’s Extension Office and others to discuss plant giveaways including groups of native plants and kits for an April 3, 2022 event. April is Native Plant month.

Covid Issues for re-opening meetings - Some clubs are re-opening with some restrictions starting in January 2022. Restrictions include masks and proof of vaccinations. It was suggested that Sandy A.
check with PRAS insurance company to see if there are any restrictions. Nancy L. also mentioned that the Suncoast Concert Band in Sarasota sent a letter to its patrons with mandatory masks and vaccination proof requirements. She offered to send a copy of the letter for the PRAS Board to consider as suggested policy.

**NEW BUSINESS:**

*Request from Port Charlotte HS Environmental Club*- Rob M. shared that PRAS had received a request from the Environmental Club at Port Charlotte High School to assist with the refurbishing of their Memorial Garden. Rob spoke with the student club president, who writes the grants, and will meet with the club. Rob will donate some plants and the County’s Extension Office may also have some plants to donate. PRAS may want to consider being a sponsor for the club. One of the National Audubon’s goals is to encourage youth participation. PRAS may also be able to certify the school site and provide seed money.

*Website Issue*- Pete Q. said he was looking at the PRAS website and is suggesting that PRAS update some language to make it more gender neutral. Specifically, changing in Objective #1 *Man’s and his to our.* Phyllis C. will look at it with Kalindi (webmaster) and Nancy L. will assist in word smithing.

*EVOC quarterly meeting summary, Manatee/Panther news*- Brenda C. shared news as the delegate and is on the Wildlife Team. She said the habitat for the panther is threatened due to erosion damage, oil operations, and well explorations which impact the water supply.

Pete Q. said there is a deal in progress for the Big Cypress Preserve from funding from the land/water conservation royalty fund to buy land preservation to protect the panthers and the Everglades from gas and oil exploration.

Brenda said there are 970 manatees. The planting of new seagrass has had limited success. Pete mentioned that other seagrass projects have been more successful.

Charlotte County Commissioners are applying for grants to improve the Charlotte Harbor and estuaries and promoting septic to sewer conversions.

*Mosaic Workshop (11/2/21) News*- There was a public hearing after Mosaic’s permit denial. Brenda C. spoke at the public hearing challenging some of Mosaic’s information.

Kerry B. stated that Mosaic is working on swaying the Commissioners in DeSoto County in the upcoming elections. Environmentalists are concerned about Peace River runoff and are looking for allies against Mosaic and phosphate mining.

*Christmas Bird Count (CBC)*- Bird count in Charlotte County is December 18th and volunteers are needed. Manasota bird count is December 19th and volunteers are also needed.

*Photo/Bird Art idea*- Brenda C. said she sent the PRAS Board some information. Photo contest/event can be promoted via the website and Facebook and can be both a fundraiser and a membership campaign. Brenda said she needs committee volunteers for the contest next spring. Kerry B. agreed to serve on the committee.
State Bird (added to agenda): Rob M. shared that there is a current State legislative proposal to change the Florida state bird from the Mockingbird to the Scrub Jay. Rob is asking PRAS to support this initiative and vote to support the resolution endorsing this legislative bill. After minimal discussion the PRAS Board unanimously voted to support this legislative proposal. Rob is planning on attending the local legislative meeting this week and will speak on behalf of PRAS supporting this proposal. A formal written endorsement from PRAS will also be needed. Mike K. asked Vikki C. to draft the letter. Vikki agreed to do and asked Rob to provide the details for the endorsement.

(Action Update: Brenda C. provided the prescribed resolution format for PRAS endorsement).

COMMITTEE REPORTS:

Finance- No report this meeting. Mike shared that Sandy A., Brenda C. and Ron Robinson serve on this committee.

Membership- Phyllis C. is working on the report. She is waiting for numbers from the National Audubon Society. Phyllis did report that the numbers are remaining steady. 5 new national members were recently added. In the past she sent welcome letters and brochures to new national members encouraging them to participate in PRAS. She will continue to track participation but may forego welcome letters in the future if no activity results this next year.

(491 current members - update reported on 11/12/21)

Conservation- Brenda C. said she has sent her conservation report from the recent Assembly to the PRAS Board. An interesting item was on the contamination of coffee beans. She said there was a great speaker who spoke on migration of the endangered panthers, sea turtles and manatees.

With the potential increase of lithium mining in the future (electric car batteries) environmentalists will need to stay aware of similar issues as experienced with Mosaic and phosphate mining.

Brenda also said PRAS may want to promote again 10 Things That Everyone of Us Can Do to encourage conservation. Brenda will send out the list to the Board members to review and for consideration of a free annual membership if a member complies with all the items. Brenda asked for a Board vote at the December meeting.

Programs- Mike K. said the next zoom program will be on November 18th and will feature guest speaker Nicole Iadevaiia (CHNEP), who will present The Health of Charlotte Harbor and Its Environs.

Field Trips- Rob M. reported that there were 13 people at CHEC today for the field trip, including some PRAS board members and a potential new PRAS member. Rob said the trails were wet but they saw lots of birds at an active “sweet spot”. Brenda C. reported sighting 23 species.

The next field trip will be at Popash Creek on 11/20/21.

Publicity- Phyllis C. said there was no report today. She continues to send out emails and post PRAS news on Facebook.
Audubon Pennington Park- Rob M. reported that all the bird baths are mysteriously back. They also recently cut down several Brazilian pepper trees and Carrotwoods at the park. Serendipitously, they were excited to find a Dahoon Holly tree that appeared to be about 20 years old.

Banquet- Sue F. reported that they have a new entertainment duo which will cost $100. The committee is working on PSA’s and are looking for radio contacts. The speaker’s topic for the banquet will be *Florida Wildlife Rewilding*. The next committee meeting will be 11/11/21 at 10:00 am via Zoom.

CHEC- Kerry B. reported that at the last CHEC meeting (Harvest on the Harbor) there was discussion regarding the receipt of $40,000 from Mosaic and should CHEC continue to accept this funding. Pete Q. pointed out that some Audubon Chapters may also still be receiving dues from Mosaic.

Kerry commented that the Butterfly Garden House at CHEC looks great. She also mentioned that Michael Haymans (CHEC Board) has a radio show and might be a good contact for a PSA for the PRAS banquet.

OPEN FORUM:

Kerry B. said there is more information about Mosaic on Facebook including “Wake up DeSoto” and #NoSaic.

Brenda C. said that Michelle Kloese, Education Committee Chair, is too busy with work to stay chair of the committee. Brenda says that PRAS needs to recruit a new chair perhaps through the Website and Facebook?

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

Respectfully Submitted,

Vikki Carpenter, Secretary