PRAS BOARD MEETING
December 14, 2021

The virtual meeting was called to order by Co-President, Mike Krzyzkowski at 7:00 pm. The following board members were also present on Zoom: Brenda Curtis, Vikki Carpenter, Sandy Artman, Rob Mills, Phyllis Cady, Sandra Kaiser, Kerry Bowers, Pete Quasius, Sue French and Nancy Leipold. Guest, Edie Driest, was also present.

Roll call indicated a quorum was present for the meeting.

A motion was made and seconded and the December 14, 2021 Agenda and the Minutes from November 9, 2021 were approved.

Sandy Artman presented the Treasurer’s report and the proposed 2022 budget. A motion was made and seconded and the report and budget were approved by the Board.

Sandy then led a discussion on the 2022 budget. Sandy indicated that PRAS has a surplus of money that can be allocated toward projects including the upcoming Giving Challenge. Board brain storming discussion ensued. Suggestions for the surplus included: more PRAS activity books for students; supporting the purchase of conservation lands; scholarship funds for stellar students at FGCU and bundling scholarship funds with other supporting foundations; replacing matching Mosaic funds to CHEC; and other environmental issues. Sandy will collect suggested emails of recommendations.

Brenda C. will conduct a Finance Committee meeting to discuss budget suggestions and recommendations.

OLD BUSSINESS:

Scrub Jay for Florida State Bird - Edie Driest was invited to speak on this item. Edie has been involved with the Environmental Conservatory in Northport (Sarasota County) with expansion into Harbour Heights and Deep Creek in Charlotte County. This Charlotte County area has a high concentration of Scrub Jay habitat which includes scrubby terrain and white sand. Some of the Conservatory goals include suitable Scrub Jay land acquisition, connectivity to larger area preserves, managing volunteers, controlled land burns, educating home owners on planting native plants, partnering with PRAS and other environmental groups, and building community involvement.

PRAS Board members discussed a possible future PRAS endorsement including dollar amounts needed for the purchase of lots in the Harbour Heights/Deep Creek area, matching funds scenarios with the Conservatory and other contributors, tie-in to County and other conservation plans, and status of legislative initiative regarding making the Scrub Jay the Florida state bird.

The PRAS Board agreed to bring back this topic in January after review and an opinion by the Conservation committee.

CHEC Blind Update - Mike K. said he has had contact with Mike Bednar, CEO CHEC. Mike B. indicated that the provider for the bird blind said it should be delivered for an installation prior to the end of the year. Sandy asked Mike K. to ask CHEC to send the invoice for PRAS’ monetary commitment and to also ask about the dedication plaque for Ron Mills.
Zoom Issues: Mike K. said speakers have used screen sharing with recent success on zoom meetings. Future costs for zoom access can be minimized with reduced storage capabilities. Board to consider how long to keep access to meetings, etc. Mike will look into storage needs.

Giving Challenge 2022/Budget Review: Sandy A. and Rob M. have been updating the PRAS profile to keep it current for future funding submission. PRAS still needs to identify a specific project/goal for the 2022 Challenge.

Bylaws Committee Update: Brenda C. said that the recommended changes to the bylaws have been sent to all the Board members for review prior to tonight’s meeting. Changes include: addition of virtual meetings; 2-year terms for officers with staggered year rotation; annual meeting in the Spring (not May designation); and Roberts Rules of Order as the standard to conduct business.

The Board approved the recommendations of the Committee. Phyllis C. will put recommended changes on Facebook and send to PRAS membership in January with a 2-week vote response time prior to final Board approval.

Plants for Birds Grant/Port Charlotte HS Environmental Club: The students want Rob M. to come back to work with another work group to include an Earth Day project. A motion was made and approved by the PRAS Board to offer $100 match for a future project.

Rob also shared that the Lemon Bay Garden Club has a beautiful butterfly garden which is pending certification.

NEW BUSINESS:

Presidents Meeting 11/24/21: Mike and Brenda reported that the meeting was a good opportunity for information sharing and gathering new ideas. Also, in discussing in person meetings, about ½ the Chapters were meeting in person and ½ were meeting virtually.

Nominating Committee for 2022 PRAS Officers and Board Members: Officers and new Board members will need to be voted in at the annual May (Spring) meeting. It was suggested that the annual meeting be conducted in April instead of May to further participation. Pete Q. offered to Chair the nominating committee and both Phyllis and Sandy agreed to serve on the committee. Officers serve for 1 year and Board members serve for 2 years with ½ the Board rotating off each year. Committee chairs will also need to be contacted to see if they are willing to serve again. It was noted that both Cindy Macri and Michelle Kloese have resigned their memberships from the Board/committee chairs so these positions will also need to be filled.

COMMITTEE REPORTS:

Finance: No report

Membership: No report

Conservation: Mike K. complimented Brenda C. on her nice conservation handout. Brenda briefly summarized the recent conference with focus on the Scrub Jay, soil protection, FEMA and changing flood insurance, Pelicans and cutting fishing lines, and E-birds.
Programs- Mike said there were no planned programs in December in lieu of the Bird Count teams scheduled to go out on December 18th in Charlotte County and December 19th at Babcock.

Field Trips- Rob M. said the walk-about at Charlotte Flatwoods on December 7th had a good turnout. Lots of questions from participants on birds and plants. (editor’s note - an interesting viewing in the early morning fog with sun burn off). Next field trip is scheduled for January 1st at Ollie’s Pond. Dave Lancaster will be hosting the walk about.

Publicity- Sandra K. reported she continues to bundle items for Kalindi for the website. She also continues to send information to the news magazine links. Phyllis C. reported PRAS has 704 FB followers. She reminded Board members to continue sending information for publicity to her or Sandra.

Education- Since Michelle Kloese has resigned from the Board and this committee chair, PRAS will need to find a new chair/coordinator. Phyllis C. will post for interest in this position on Facebook and Brenda will reach out to some STEM teachers.

Birdathon- It was mentioned that there are no plans yet for the Birdathon in 2022.

Audubon Pennington Park- Cindy Macri continues to work at the park but Rob M. has agreed to Chair this committee. Rob states that there continues to be vandalism and clean up issues including cigarette butts, stolen bird baths and signage graffiti. Rob also reported that a small alligator has been spotted at the park.

Banquet- Sandra K. thanked Sue F. and other committee members for their hard work and dedication on organizing this event scheduled for March 24, 2022. Although disappointed that Covid 19 has again prevented pursuing this upcoming event, she believes it is the time to cancel the event before any further plans or commitments are made. Sandra will contact Twin Isles Country Club (TICC) to see if PRAS can get its deposit returned. Sandra also mentioned that TICC’s prices have significantly increased and suggested the future Banquet committee may want to explore alternative venues.

CHEC- Kerry reported that CHEC meets every other month. The next meeting is in January. Discussion at the meeting will include alternative funding to replace $40,000 in money from Mosaic. A request for possible funding from the County is being considered. Phosphate mining is scheduled for the Commission meeting in January.

OPEN FORUM:

Sandy A. asked Rob M. when he expected to have the Plants for Birds grant funds expended. Rob shared that the grant money will be spent in the spring of 2022. He is working with the County’s Extension Office on an event in April and anticipates spending all the funds at that time.

Mike announced that the next regular PRAS Board meeting will be on January 11, 2022 at 7:00 pm via zoom. The next General PRAS meeting will be on January 20, 2022 via zoom.

After no further discussion, Co- President Mike Krzyzkowski adjourned the meeting at 9:10 pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

Vikki Carpenter, Secretary