

Virginia Native Plant Society Board Meeting December 6, 2021

In attendance:

Nancy Vehrs (president)
Sally Anderson (2nd VP)
Kathleen Stasulis (Treasurer)
Mark Murphy, Website Admin
Peggy Troyer, Fundraising Chair
John Hayden Botany Chair
Virginia Witmer, Publications Chair
Johnny Townsend, DAL Natural Heritage
Laura Beaty, Horticulture Chair
Ashley Moulton, Publicity Chair
Jim Hurley, Co-chair Invasive Species Education
Alex Fisher, Conservation Chair
Jessica Fleming, Blue Ridge Wildflower Society
Emily Southgate, Piedmont
Ted Munns, Northern Neck
Matt Brooks, Pocahontas
Brenda Graff, New River
Jan Smith, Upper James River
Alan Ford, Potowmack
Mary Lee Epps, Jefferson
Lucille Kossodo, John Clayton
Pat Quinn, South Hampton Roads

Call to order by Nancy at 7:03 pm.

Betty Truax was unable to attend. Sally Anderson recorded these minutes.

September minutes - Lucille moved and Alan seconded that we approve the minutes, and the vote was unanimous in favor.

Treasurer's Report was circulated ahead of the meeting.

- Income is up, expenses are lower, so we are in good shape.
- Taxes for 2020 have been filed.
- All but one chapter is in compliance with VDACS fundraising requirements, and that chapter is in process.
- The Executive Committee recommended that VNPS increase its coverage for theft by staff or volunteers from \$10,000 to \$100,000, which added \$194 to our premiums each year.

Establishment of a committee to recommend investment policy and potential implementation. Emily moved and Ted seconded that we form the committee and the board approved the formation unanimously. Mark Murphy, Kevin Howe and Ted Munns have joined that committee and Kathleen Stasulis will act as an ex officio member since she is treasurer. We

would like five committee members and will ask the chapters for suggestions and put a note in the next electronic Leaf Letter. Someone with investment experience would be helpful. In additional discussion, Alan thought we should be spending the money on our mission versus building a portfolio and Nancy pointed out that with additional income from investments we might be able to fund more things we want to do.

2021 Fundraiser for Natural Area Preserves Fund has been highly successful, with \$41,220 raised. About \$2000 of this covers mailing expenses. Handwritten notes will be sent to those donating over \$100. The board thanked Peggy for her work on the fundraiser.

In addition, the silent auction set up to support this project has raised \$6250 after expenses. There was sponsorship money and donations collected, and 71 of the 72 items offered received bids. Thanks were extended to Mark for his work on the auction - a bit more than expected. Johnny thanked VNPS on behalf of recipient of the funds, the Natural Heritage Program.

Invasive Species Working Group: Jim Hurley reported that the group held its final meeting on November 10. They gathered recommendations from the group, which DCR and VDACS will compile into a report for legislators. A comment period will follow and VNPS should comment. Our members were disappointed that at the last meeting the Virginia Nursery and Landscape Association, previously willing to make a compromise offer, had decided not to do that. Because of this not much progress was made to stem the sale of invasive plants. There may be more talks to try and change the definition of 'commercially viable', which now includes any potential sale, regardless of the cost of invasive removal associated with a plant that Emily mentioned. In spite of this outcome, Nancy and Jim have worked with Delegate Bulova to introduce two bills during the upcoming legislative season and have requested a strategy session with him. Virginia noted that the Plant Virginia Natives initiative to replace invasives with natives was not accurately described and not much in evidence in the discussions.

2022 Annual Workshop - Plants and Geology: The EC recommended another virtual meeting. Some groups are hosting live events, and Jessica thought we might be able to do it, but a new variant of the pandemic virus is making things uncertain and our lecture space has areas where physical distancing would be difficult. Sally mentioned that speakers have been booked by Joey, but dates have not yet been pinned down.

2022 Annual Meeting: A discussion of having a Zoom event again was discussed. Sally suggested a one-day outdoor event with a picnic/meeting and various walks, if possible all to be held in one location. Some people seemed interested in that so we will work on it this winter and see if it is something we could do.

VNPS will recognize the retirement from Natural Heritage of Gary Fleming and Tom Smith by giving them lifetime memberships in VNPS. Nancy will attend a retirement celebration for Gary. Gary, Tom and Irv Wilson (also just retired from NHP) are featured in the latest *Sempervirens*, and a more extensive interview with Gary will be in an upcoming issue.

Board Vacancies:

Conservation - Alex Fisher will step down after this meeting. He is willing to help the next person who takes the position. He was thanked for his good work for VNPS.

Diversity and Inclusion: Membership chair Kathleen O'Shea put an article in *Sempervirens* and we are looking for someone to do this job.

Fundraising: Peggy agreed to stay on for this year, but a replacement is needed.

Other:

- Ashley has learned how to put a Donate button on the Facebook posts and will occasionally do so.

- Emily reviewed her work on the Loudoun County Environmental Commission. Recently a public input session garnered about 70 responses, many of them positive and mentioning the importance of native plants. The group will make recommendations to the County Board of Supervisors.

- Matt said that the Pocahontas Chapter had a three day display at the State Fair that contacted probably thousands of people who came through.

- Jim said that Blue Ridge PRISM got substantial and ongoing support that will finance 2 new full time positions to work with landowners and they hope to hire by spring of 2022.

Adjourned at 8:47 pm.