

Virginia Native Plant Society Quarterly Board Meeting
January 16, 2024
Zoom Meeting

In attendance:

Nancy Vehrs, President
Sally Anderson, 2nd VP
Melissa Korzuch, Treasurer
Mark Murphy, Director at Large, Technology
Anna Finch, Secretary
Emilia Godwin, Fundraising Chair
Barbara Ryan, Conservation Chair
John Hayden, Botany Chair
Joey Thompson, Education Chair
Laura Beaty, Horticulture Chair
John Townsend, Director at Large Natural Heritage
Jim Hurley, Director at Large Invasive Plant Education
Melody Starya Mobley, DEI Chair
Ashley Moulton, Publicity Chair
Virginia Witmer, Publications Chair
Joe Villari, Director at Large
Pat Quinn, South Hampton Roads
Robert Boehringer, New River
Carol Carter, Jefferson
Jennifer McCarthy, Blue Ridge Wildflower
Emily Southgate, Piedmont
Anna Maria Johnson, Shenandoah
Alan Ford, Potowmack
Matt Brooks, Pocahontas
Lora Steiner, Shenandoah VP, and Local Rep for 2024 annual meeting committee
Tom Smith, VNPS Volunteer Lobbyist

Nancy called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

Introductions/Announcements/Agenda changes/Additions:

- Hello to Anna, Emilia, Melissa, and Carol Carter with new roles and Robert Boehringer new President of New River.
- Kevin Howe not present due to anniversary.
- Passing along a reminder for research grants, no application yet, deadline is February 1.

Approval of Minutes of September Board Meeting – Nancy – not finished yet, Anna to assist and hope to send out shortly.

Treasurer's Report –Melissa Korzuch:

- Working with Karen York not able to get some access for some things, Nancy and Sally can help with questions as well with transition and some bank issues. Can assist in Exec meeting next month too.

- Working on reconciling some accounts and statements. November is reconciled, not December yet, will send out final report soon.
- Annual Meeting did well will have a written report next month.

2023 Fundraiser Report – Emilia Godwin:

- Did well, and sent out thank you cards to those who contributed with certain amounts to get to know them better and next year can do a committee to help write.
- We reached our goal of \$50,000 and more pledges coming in.
- And heard today from an anonymous donor for charitable donation/grant to us in the amount of \$25,000 so that is great news as well. More information to come.
- Always opportunities to grow and expand fundraising.

2024 General Assembly Legislation Report – Barbara Ryan and Tom Smith:

- Tom Smith spent the whole day in Richmond advocating for plants.
- Barbara said there are new faces in the General Assembly and a lot of bills going through, tracking at least 5 or 6.
- Discussed some we are tracking and talking points to reach out to legislators, like Cave Board, English Ivy, Pesticide Control, Tree Legislation (3 or 4 not in report but can send out after Emily requested a copy).
- Tom shared the plant and caving community spoke out in numbers about the Cave Board bill and it was stricken down. Caves and Karst are connected to plants and have quite the diversity.
- Labeling Invasive Plants as well watered down a bit to send to Finance Committee, House can sign no penalty so might be better with the signage/language.
- Restriction on landscaping, huge agenda and Delegate Bulova champion.
- Homeowners Association another big group with bill HB47, going to Agriculture Subcommittee tomorrow.
- People can testify remotely, can do via Zoom or submit comments. Written comments are great, they like to hear from their constituents.
- Budget Amendments, Nancy required for Natural Area preserves to eliminate naming requirement since quite the process and 5 new positions for Natural Area Preserve.
- Tom is our Volunteer unpaid Lobbyist, retired Deputy, extensive background.
- Melody asked about Richard Sullivan, and Barbara said he is a friend of VNPS and helping with tree bills. Chesapeake Bay Foundation taking lead with tree bills, we can support.
- Mention of Fairfax County, District 8, ordinances for higher tree canopy in urban areas with high heat.
- Senate not as virtual accessible like House is and with written comments.
- Bills go through fast. If you go in person best to meet before meeting. Jim was going tomorrow to Richmond.

Annual Workshop – Joey Thompson:

- Theme of protecting plants in Virginia region by region.
- If need any other speakers let him know, some speaking about Native Seed project and easements.
- General overview of regions.
- Joey thanked Melody for reaching out about diverse group of speakers and support.
- Nancy would like to do it back in person someday in the future.
- It is a free event and can ask for suggested donations.

Formal Endorsement of White Paper on Solar Facilities – Tom Smith

- Mark asked how we would use this document if we publish it as a Society. Answer would to use it as a resource for Solar projects, like a guiding document and help us make comments, similar Barbara said how we did the Cultivar statement. And put on our website.
- Emily shared about Loudoun County having a similar and Nature Conservancy, can be weak in consideration of sites and thought a study in North Carolina was much better with a flow chart. Important to include references and information out there is so variable and a lot out there. Nancy shared Soil and Water Conservation are considering this issue too.
- Carol moved to pass and support the paper, and Sally to second and it passed unanimously to publicize as well and put on our website, and social media.

2024 Annual Meeting – Date and Location in the Harrisonburg area:

- Lora Steiner spoke and is our local contact for the Annual Meeting.
- Was looking for a place that was ADA compliant, ideal parking, and not break the bank.
- 2 places the 1.) Plecker Center, standard conference, easy parking and 2.) Massanetta Springs-all-inclusive conference with lodging/etc. September 20-21(both sites available that date) or October 4-5(only available for Plecker Center).
- Lora shared Master Naturalists used Massanetta and loved it. More logistical work with the site, and she helped block those dates with both sites for us and talked to sites about a week ago.
- JMU site we would have had to wait till Summer to book so we eliminated that option and Anna Maria confirmed best decision to go elsewhere like Massanetta which is cute and great recommendations and kudos for Lora!
- Now we can go visit the sites and Exec Board can discuss and move forward with planning.
- Field trips also really awesome places nearby those sites/area.

Statewide Field Trip(s) for 2024:

- Kevin Howe sent email and happy to help with field trips this year. Different sites around the state like Eastern Shore, Savage Neck Dunes, Hickory Hollow with Kentucky and Lady slippers, SW Region like Pinnacle Natural Area Preserve, Northern Region-Bull Run Mountains, will discuss at next Exec Board Meeting.
- Kevin did field trips for Annual Meeting in 2023 and went great! Some this year could be Maple Flats. Any other ideas?
- Johnny Townsend to lead some, perhaps to NC? Johnny and Sally to discuss.
- Would like to do more this year, sometimes there is more demand than slots available.

T-shirt Art Contest for 2024 Wildflower of the Year White Turtlehead – Ashley Moulton:

- Ashley mentioned three issues to do better this year. 1.) Budget- 500 dollars and helps with prizes 2.) 2 colors to increase profitability vs multicolor 3.) Ranked voting this year.
- Mentioned Wildflower Brochure and recommendation to change font- Nancy Sorrels update almost ready with draft.
- Ashley asked when to close campaign for older sales to make it ready for new tee-shirts.
- Pins doing well sold 60 out of 100.
- Sold over \$1,300 with shirts.
- Mark moved that the board support and authorize \$500 for the prize/budget.-Melissa seconded, and it carried. Goal to have landing page for shirt and link to name of the workshop and dates to come.

Updates from DEIJ Committee – Melody Starya Mobley:

- Goal to visit all of the Chapters to discuss DEIJ, did Piedmont Chapter recently. Melody and Nancy want to go to more. Emily said the meeting with Melody was fascinating, with good suggestions, and recommends more chapters meeting with her.
- Still having some trouble getting representatives from all chapters to the DEIJ end of the month meetings. Pat said her son would represent for Pat at next meeting for South Hampton Roads. Melody gave kudos to Joe Villari as Vice Pres/Chair of the DEIJ committee.

Technology/Website Updates/Issues – Mark Murphy:

- Mark thanked Betsy Washington for some wonderful article contributions to the blog.
- Recently added gift memberships and recurring donations on the website.
- Mark gave a shout out to Karen in helping with orders as well as other duties.
- Selling merchandise and working with Ashley. 252 orders, 737 items sold on Bonfire, 2,716 members. We would like to get to 3,000 members!
- Suggestion of gift memberships of students of color, Melody/Joe mentioned since students can't always afford.
- 70,000 members in the Facebook group, get some trolls in there sometimes, and wish to make more of those 70,000 paying members!

Chapter/Committee News as Time Permits:

- Nancy asked Johnny Townsend to share report of Natural Heritage and suggested he could submit an article for *Sempervirens*. Lots of interesting news like new plant discovery, and publication of the Isopods and more Cave info to come like Cave cats and more!
- Alan Ford brought up to consider a different way of leading walks, not with an expert leader, but an excited group of people sharing and learning together. Sometimes with the walks with an expert the spots fill up very quickly, and want more people in the field, learning, not just teacher/student dynamic. Nancy said she has done some exploratory walks. And it was mentioned one leader doing multiple walks in one day to accommodate more people can be exhausting. Master Naturalists do a similar thing of learning together on walks. Emily shared on a recent Poop Walk they broke up into different groups, nice to engage and have enough people who can interpret and point out things.
- Jim Hurley discussed the Blue Ridge PRISM-3 Day Strategic planning workshop they had recently. It was to educate about invasive plants and increase availability of native plants. They came up with 9 strategic objectives from the work groups. They would like to generate around the state, and put footprint on state and legislative agendas. If anyone wants to get involved reach out to Jim.

Also mentioned of Nominating Committee- Sally to chair it, Melody to be on it, Betty Traux, Peggy Troyer. Alan moved to approve the appointments, and Pat seconded it and it passed unanimously.

Nancy mentioned she is in her 4th term as President and it ends this year. No one has served more than 3 terms before. She loves the role but doesn't want to be President for life so something to think about.

Deadline for Next Issue of *Sempervirens* – January 31

Next BOD meeting: **March – Virtual through Zoom** – date/time to be determined

Adjourn: 8:41 p.m.