

Virginia Native Plant Society

Potowmack Chapter Board Meeting – May 10, 2022

Opening

The meeting was conducted via Zoom with the assistance of Mark Murphy, Vice President in keeping with best practices in the cautiously optimistic post-COVID period. It was called to order at 7:30 pm by President Alan Ford.

Board Members Present

Mark Murphy – Vice President
Scott Knudsen – Treasurer
Patrick Siren – Secretary
Nelson DeBarros – Botany Chair
David Gorsline – Membership Chair
Margaret Chatham – Newsletter Chair
Margaret Fisher – Member At Large
Judy Dority – Member At Large
Donna Murphy – Programs/At Large

Chapter Members Present

Suzette Risacher

Next Meeting

The next board meeting is scheduled for the 7th of July

Minutes

The Minutes from the 3, March 2022 meeting board meeting were approved.

Forum

Suzette Risacher, a new member of our chapter, introduced herself to the board and offered her assistance as a volunteer. Suzette is a Native Arlingtonian, Mother of 3, and has a Wildlife Certified Yard that her neighbors have learned to love. She graduated from Virginia Tech in May of 2022 with a Masters in Natural Resources and is excited to lend her expertise to the chapter in any and every way that she can.

Chair Reports

Note: Chapter President Alan Ford called for Critical Issues Only

Treasury

Scott gave a brief report on budget vs. actuals progress since the beginning of the year. He reported that we have a few expenses outstanding from recent walks and benches purchased for the propagation beds. He also reported that the Treasury is anticipating the printing invoice for the latest edition of the *Plant NOVA Natives (PNN)* guides and expenses relating to the internship we sponsor at Green Spring Gardens. Scott reports, however, that the chapter is still on track to meet our budget for expenses this year and will continue to update these figures as updates continue.

Margaret Chatham noted that the four-month total for sales did not accurately reflect April and May's combined sales figures. In response, Alan committed to depositing the May sales check

Scott's report continued with PNN guide sales, totalling a little over a thousand dollars. The 3rd edition / 4th printing has been on sale for over 18 months so the revenue from the 3rd edition is not expected to be compromised in a single year, despite the release of the 4th edition later this year. These sales have been extremely successful for the chapter, totaling approximately \$16,000 over several years.

Membership

David reports that membership continues to grow at a steady rate.

Alan reports that the plant sales have been helping to boost membership as well. Not only have we seen steady enthusiasm for on-site registrations but customers are interested in online registration, as well.

Propagation

In absence of Laura Beaty, Propagation Committee Chair, Alan and Donna report.

As of this meeting there was one week before the first wednesday sale and spring sale. We should expect a full day: 9am-2pm

Anyone who can and wants to help is welcome; there is always plenty of work for all:

Plants need to be potted

Signs need to be put out

Beds need straightening

Tents need raising
Chairs need to be corralled

Plant Rescue

Sources close to the project report that work equipment is imminent at the North Fairfax rescue, meaning that time is limited to find plants. Alan promises further updates as information becomes available.

New on Alan's radar, VDOT is planning to stage equipment for the upcoming I-495 expansion in McLean in a small area along Scott's Run. Construction is not starting immediately - maybe Fall 22, Spring 23. This is the time to be settling paperwork and trying to survey the land for potential rescue areas. Alan has reached out to the Fairfax County Park Authority about establishing a rescue agreement, expecting that they will be more amenable to conservation efforts than the VDOT project management.

In making his argument for the necessity of a rescue opportunity, Alan spoke specifically to the importance of ensuring that the staging area's remediation plan is handled properly. The major concern being that VDOT's solution to restoring the area will be limited to any random seed pack of "native plants" without any consideration for forest ecology or species matrixes that would ensure a successful restoration.

Should the chapter get involved the early-stage priorities include squaring away the proper paperwork and conducting botanical research so that we are prepared to speak to the relevant authorities about properly remediating the area.

Alan will keep the board apprised as information becomes available.

Programs

Donna is looking for recommendations for new walks.

Nelson is concerned about planning a walk and having no one show up for heat or injury or other reason.

Margaret Chatham suggested a walk at Riverbend walk when the *asclepias tuberosa* are in bloom.

Alan made the point that plenty of parks are fine for botanizing, making it easier for potential participants. Not only are they walking on a trail that's well established but a pleasant and productive walk makes the park a place they know that they can visit, afterwards.

The grass bunch expects to continue walks throughout the month at Huntley Meadows.

Nelson and Alan to plan some walks offline

New Business

Budget Advisory Committee

Chapter VP Mark Murphy gave a brief history of the committee and thanked Treasurer Scott Knudsen for the data he gathered to aid the committee.

Major recommendations include:

- Establishing a reserve fund
- Improving Propagation beds
- Ongoing maintenance budget for prop beds
- Plant NOVA Natives funds to be tracked in a unique account separate from VNPS PC's operating accounts.

The board initially had mixed reactions to the proposal, with some being concerned about the additional overhead of managing multiple accounts and others expressing distress over the amount of time the board has spent in budgetary discussions simply clarifying the financial relationship between the Chapter and the Plant Nova Natives Campaign.

Additional concerns arose over the stability of committing to another internship at Green Spring Gardens, or other mission-specific organization. Alan and David argued that it would be prudent to commit to better supporting the internships we've made available so far so that candidates are more likely to recommend our sponsored programs to their peers, affording continuous sponsorship opportunities in the future. David's secondary argument being that if the internship continues to prove viable we can consider additional internships in the future but we have no guarantee at this time that the finances will be available to sustain a second internship for longer than the single year proposed by the Budget Advisory Committee.

With these concerns in mind the Board voted to approve a proposal from Alan that provided a simplified form of the budget recommendations. He proposed that the Board should commit \$10,000 of unallocated cash for educational purposes and

roughly \$5,000 of unallocated cash to support and improve the propagation beds at Green Spring Gardens. Under this proposal the Executive Committee would work to finalize the recommendations included in the annual budget proposal that is submitted to the membership at the Annual Meeting.

Finally, Margaret C asked the board to consider whether we will return to in-person programs that would require booking and paying for the use of Green Spring's meeting room or to continue with zoom meetings indefinitely. The board will continue to evaluate this concern as information regarding COVID restrictions continues to update.

Closing

Annual Meeting

Alan proposes to move the annual meeting to November 13th.

Donna volunteered to make the reservation, with the Board's understanding that we can reach out to our partners at Green Spring Gardens if we need to reschedule.

The board largely, though unofficially, agrees to not commit to an in-person meeting for the event, largely due to the constantly evolving nature of COVID restrictions and guidance.

Plant Nova Native Guides

New Plant Nova Native Guides - Available to the public no more than three weeks.

Margaret Fisher to forward a digital copy of the PNN Guide for the website

Cedar Point Update

VDOT is going forward with the project to put that bike path into the swamp. We're leading walks for the HOA to educate their membership about the value of their swamp.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:30pm