

Prairie Smoke Board Wednesday March 22, 2023 Meeting Minutes

Attendees: Ed Pfannkoch, Susan Powers, Barb Nigon, Ryan Kemmerick, Spence Ruff, Chuck Kernler, Walt Nigon

Read and approve prior meeting minutes

Minutes from August 2022 read and approved

Treasurer report

Treasurer report was given by Ryan. Current balance increased by about \$1000 from 2022. A check for \$300 was sent to the Chatfield library as a donation for use of the meeting room for the annual meeting in 2022 and 2023 (no donation made in 2022). This is the same rate we give to Chester Woods for use of the pavilion for the annual picnic. 990 paperwork for nonprofit status to be completed April 1, 2023. As a new board member, Spence asked about PS sources of revenue (primarily dues, donations and existing money when PS split from Chatfield Fish & Game). Motion to accept the treasurer report was made, seconded and passed unanimously.

The Bremer bank branch in Eyota has closed so the PS documents previously stored in the safe deposit box there are temporarily stored in a personal safe. PS banking business is being done at the branch in Rochester. Barb to follow up on moving the PS bank account to the new ForeSight bank opening in Eyota this summer.

Next installment payment of \$100 to the Barb Nigon endowment for the Chatfield library to be made this summer. We would like additional suggestions for books to be purchased by the library using those funds.

Website updates

PS website domain renewals (3 yrs each) were made and paid for by Maribeth McLaughlin (webmaster) in the amount of \$525. Ryan has sent her a check as reimbursement.

Ed and Maribeth worked together to correct an issue regarding incorrect displaying of event times on the PS website event calendar. Issue was resolved.

New Business

Ed suggested PS purchase a vertical banner/flag for use at PS events such as the annual picnic or field trips to help members find the group. Ed will check on costs with Herold Flags in Rochester.

Susan said the Rochester Garden & Flower Club plant sale is May 18 & 19 and she will follow up to see if this may be a volunteer opportunity for a PS member . UPDATE- Susan found there is sufficient staffing at the event to answer native plant questions so no PS volunteer is needed.

Ryan volunteered to check on costs of PS having a table at the Rochester Farmer's market as a possible outreach event.

Spence offered to contact the new local newspaper Country Acres to see if they are interested in doing a story about Prairie Smoke.

Ed brought up the topic of setting up a PS funded scholarship (which has been discussed a few times in the past). Discussion centered on keeping the funds local and targeting candidates studying environmental science or other disciplines related to prairies and native plants. It was generally agreed that PS funds would have more impact if a portion could be used for scholarships rather than sitting in the bank. Chuck volunteered to contact RCTC to see if they have existing guidelines for scholarship fund donations.

Ed received a request from Chatfield Fish & Game club for help performing a prescribed burn. Much discussion ensued. The PS policy is that we only provide equipment and burn support to PS members, and it is possible for organizations to join as members. This discussion raised the issue of PS liability, so the discussion was tabled until liability issues could be resolved.

Liability issues: Ed offered to have a local attorney review the current PS landowner liability waiver to get a current opinion whether it provides sufficient protection to PS in the event of an issue during a burn. Ryan, Ed and Barb agreed to follow up with different insurance companies to see if they offer liability insurance to cover burns and also to inquire about Directors & Officers insurance in the event of other lawsuits.

Barb received a request from the Driftless organization for a donation to support an additional documentary film expanding on their "Decoding the Driftless" film. Motion to make a donation of \$100 was made, seconded and passed.

Future activities

(President suggests at least one board member present at any activity, to coordinate and report)

Spring Ditch pickup scheduled for Wednesday April 19.

Ed suggested a PS event for members to hike the Lost Creek Trail outside of Chatfield. This is a significant distance (6 miles) on uneven terrain so several board members expressed concern that not many people may participate. Discussion was tabled.

Ed was contacted by the person in charge of the Grand Meadow Chert Quarry who offered to give PS a guided tour of the site which also includes a restored prairie. Ed will follow up and get possible dates.

A motion was made, seconded and passed to make the PS TMR workday an annual event in the fall to coincide with National Public Lands Day which will be September 23, 2023.

Fall picnic Tentative date Sunday, October 8. Chester Woods County Park. This date should allow for more seed collection and seed exchange.

Ditch cleanup -After fall picnic, tentative date Wednesday, October 11

Suggestions were made at the annual PS meeting for speakers on the following topics: Native bees and pollinators; Foraging and canning

Tour of Weaver Bottoms site- Chuck to follow up

Hayden Prairie tour (Iveson suggested)

Board members generally agreed that PS can be a clearinghouse for information on prairie related events without actually needing to sponsor the event. Events such as Fillmore Soil&Water activities will be posted on the PS calendar and can be included in member emails.

Meeting adjourned 9:40 pm Notes taken by Walt Nigon