

Lake Roland Nature Council
Board Meeting Minutes
May 20, 2020 at 6:30 PM
Meeting held via Zoom

Board Members Present: Kurt Davis, Christine Corbitt, Howdy Knipp, Jeffrey Budnitz, Elise Butler, Jim Flannery, Jonathon Wood, Dwight Johnson, Carlton Sexton, Beth Hoker, Bill Jones, Marc Klein, Gero Verheyen, Lydia Redding

Other Attendees: Kay McConnell, Kimberly Warren

President Kurt Davis called the meeting to order at 6:33 pm.

Approval of Minutes:

Minutes of Feb. 2020 Meeting were approved.

Treasurer's Report:

ASSETS

Current Assets

Checking/Savings 28,533.37

Total Current Assets 28,533.37

Fixed Assets 430,372.98

TOTAL ASSETS 458,906.35

LIABILITIES & EQUITY

Liabilities

Current Liabilities

Other Current Liabilities 79,484.00

Total Current Liabilities 79,484.00

Total Liabilities 79,484.00

Equity 379,422.35

TOTAL LIABILITIES & EQUITY 458,906.35

Staff Report:

Ranger Jonathan Wood reports that park usage is up almost 300%. This means that staff is busy with upkeep, trash collection, etc. Most people are doing what they are supposed to be doing. Starting Monday, park staff will become "Social Ambassadors" enforcing County and State rules. Staff have some discretion—for example, picnicking on a blanket will be allowed.

We don't know what will happen to the planned summer camp. Will there be regular camp or some form of virtual programming to keep kids and families involved with the park? The situation is very fluid.

Lake Roland is under a hiring freeze, which means we are short-staffed. Staff are patrolling as much as possible, and picking up lots of personal protective equipment (masks, wipes, tissues). We're trying to keep signage up. There's a lot of trash around the cave on the Pink Trail. We may limit usage of the cave to 15 minutes.

Some physical improvements to the park have been done while following the proper social distancing. A concrete grill pad at the new pavilion is complete. This is far superior to the mudhole we had around the grill. We also were able to do prep work for a memorial bench. And a County crew did preliminary work for adding security cameras on the Nature Center, Ranger Station and bridge.

Committee Reports:

Environmental and Historic Preservation—Elise Butler. No report. Committee has not met since March.

Paw Point—Jeffrey Budnitz and Beth Hoker. 693 members. The grass has come back nicely because Paw Point is closed. We've started maintenance to prepare for the reopening.

Trails Committee—Jeffrey Budnitz. Spring maintenance on LRNC equipment is complete. He's waiting for the go-ahead to do larger projects.

Recreation—Gero Verheyen. On hold. Gero as an individual worked on a mount for the taxidermied beaver. Howdy Knipp added that the spring cleanup of the lakeshore did not happen, but Howdy as an individual spent five days collecting trash from the lake borders.

Membership—Jeffrey Budnitz. 206 members.

Residents—Bill Jones. No report.

Old Business:

Kurt reported that his intent was to discuss moving forward with Phase II of the Larry Weaner Landscape Associates proposal for the Nature Center Landscape Design at this meeting. However, on Friday May 15 Jenna Webster and Rebecca Kagle announced that LWLA was withdrawing the proposal because of differences of philosophy and direction. So the topic of discussion became how to move forward given LWLA's withdrawal.

Kurt said he would put together an informal discussion group, not a committee, to discuss plans for the site. Any Board member who wishes to join should contact Kurt.

Jeffrey said the site has great potential. Its closeness to the Nature Center is a big advantage.

Howdy asked if we can move forward with a rudimentary path without permits.

Kurt commented that one of LRNC's concerns was that permits to work in a wetlands area would take years. Jeffrey, Elise and Jim Flannery have already experienced how difficult it was to get permits for the Boardwalk and Nature Center.

Kurt--The door is not closed to further collaboration with LWLA.

Gero-- We should consider using trails that already exist behind the Nature Center.

Kimberly Warren— Kay McConnell and I are sorely disappointed. The project had such great positive momentum. Guilford Garden Club will need a few weeks to decide how to respond to LWLA's withdrawal.

Gero—Wants to be part of the discussion group. We already have a lot of information.

Peter Lev—Asked for an explanation of the philosophical differences.

Kurt responded that he really doesn't know. Jenna and Rebecca provided no specifics.

Jonathan—We do have the Short-term Invasive Management Plan to work with. A big issue has been getting enough boots on the ground to implement that plan. We have not tried to work in the wetlands area, and maybe we shouldn't work there.

New Business:

Kurt briefed the group on recent Dept. of Recreation and Parks meetings, involving either Rec. Councils and Nature Councils or Nature Councils only. All the Nature Parks are overwhelmed with visitors. Ranger Wood said we don't have answers about funding, hiring, or whether camps will meet. Extremely frustrating. Kurt said there are a couple of grant opportunities from the County for Covid-19 emergency relief for nonprofits. Kurt wrote a grant proposal requesting \$15,000 for Lake Roland. We're supposed to hear on May 25. Day care and health care are priorities for this grant, so Kurt is not too optimistic.

Jeffrey explained that if summer programming is canceled the cash flow impact could be up to \$45,000. He has applied for a grant from Constellation Energy. If you know of any other grant opportunities let Kurt and Jeffrey know.

Kurt said the County is very cautious about programming for children. We are planning some activities and resources for children if the in-person camp is canceled, but not a full-fledged "virtual camp." This may include something like craft kits that can be sent to families. We will not rely entirely on computer technology because families are already weary of classes by computer.

Bill Jones asked about ongoing fundraising for the Nature Center building. Jeffrey replied that he gave the County a \$70,000 check for the building. We now owe \$79,000.

The meeting adjourned at 7:10 pm.

Minutes taken by Peter Lev