

Nature Education Standing Committee Minutes Nov. 8th, 2018

Present: Nancy Brundage, Peggy Palma (peggyannpalma@gmail.com), Stacey Sahli, Nick Visingardi, Advisor Carol Vigorito, Dr. Lauren Schroeder, Kat Paull, Josh Boyle

Old business:

Mr. Boyle called meeting to order. He introduced Mrs. Peggy Palma to our committee to replace Laurel Gay. She described herself as a former educator, newly retired, likes to read and sow. She is a neighbor of park and volunteers at the Butler Art Institute in Youngstown.

Mr. Boyle proceeded with an overview of the previous meeting minutes. Mrs. Brundage motioned to approve the minutes, seconded by Mr. Visingardi, all say aye.

Next order of business was the development of SMART Goals. Dr. Schroeder agrees with Mrs. Paull's thoughts about incorporating environmental awareness into the SMART goals. He wishes for the park take a more active role in educating community with environmental literacy and environmental concerns. He suggested not just educational programs for school children but also for adults and the general public, possibly even with an expert present to comment. Mrs. Vigorito asked what his goal would be for this committee. Mrs. Palma ask: Do we want more visitors? Mr. Boyle responded: Yes absolutely! So our focus from here was: What can we focus on? What do we or the park value? We want to know what programs are successful and what can we do to make others more successful. There is some good data but what data are we lacking.

Goal 1: Monitor and evaluate programs the park is offering, education and public alike, that deal with local environmental issues.

Some examples of programs that we do not offer right now would include information on water quality, air quality, geese, invasive species, and neighborhood wildlife

Mrs. Brundage asked if we should include all education programs?

Mr. Boyle made a motion to adopt our proposed goal, Dr. Schroeder seconded. Dr. Schroeder asked why what was the rationale for leaving out global environmental factors. Mr. Boyle said that we are the Nature Education Committee for Mill Creek Park and we should focus on keeping things local. All in favor, all say aye. We agreed that this is a good starting place.

We found the goals are due by the board meeting on Dec. 17th.

Mrs. Brundage wants us to continue to search for additional programs for the park to consider, like something innovative, something for underserved audiences, and programs for all age groups.

Goal 2: Monitor and evaluate nature education audiences and make recommendations where more opportunity exists by exploring collaboration with outside organizations.

Mr. Boyle is still compiling information to write an outline for the Committee's presentation to the board in December. We will evaluate what he develops at the next meeting.

Mr. Boyle mentioned a partnership that could help us attain our goals. The City Nature Challenge is an international contest where people photograph insects,

plants, anything living and upload them to a website that everyone has access to. Mrs. Brundage mentioned that the park currently has the I Naturalist program, which is the same application the Challenge will utilize. Mrs. Sahli asked if there was an incentive? Mr. Boyle said, not really, it is more of a title for whoever uploads the most images. Mrs. Paull mentioned that the challenge could include scouts, high school teachers, and other groups. The time frame for the competition is from April 26-29th, but the park could host a bio-blitz to get involved.

New business:

Mr. Boyle mentioned a future recommendation to raise the Naturalist/Educator pay. Currently they receive \$9.40/hour. An educator at Youngstown City starts at \$22/hour. The position of Naturalist requires at least an associates degree and experience on the job. Mr. Boyle asked Mrs. Vigorite if she thinks that is a fair pay. She said no. Part time salaries will be addressed in the new budget. We will monitor this and see what the board does (on Nov. 19th) before making a recommendation. Mrs. Brundage mentioned that there should be at least one full time naturalist. Mrs. Paul said that we should make a recommendation, because if you look at the research, many other parks have at least one full time Naturalist because of part time worker turnover. We want consistency and longevity for the programs and park, and this can only be attained with at least one full time person. We tabled this discussion until we see what develops through the board meeting.

Mrs. Palma asked if the park can make brochures. Mrs. Vigorito said yes. Mrs. Paul asked what is the plan for the Ford Nature Center, what types of programs do they plan to offer, and how will it change upon redesign. What are the projected ideas so we can help in any way. Mrs. Vigorito said the basic renderings of the building reconstruction can be found online and she discussed some of the plans. It is all very exciting.

Mrs. Paull mentioned that if we are going to evaluate programs we would also want to assess what groups or people are being turned away along with the programs they were hoping to see. It is important to know why they were turned away so that better recommendations could be made. She also asked how would the park track that or keep records. Mrs. Vigorito said that online registration would be coming soon because the current facility reservation is only antiquated by 15 years.

Committee Time/Comments: none

Public comments to Committee: none

Next meeting: Tuesday Dec. 4th in Classroom A at Metroparks Farms.

Adjournment: Mrs. Sahli motioned to adjourn meeting, seconded by Mrs. Palma. All say aye.