

Nature Education Standing Committee Minutes April, 25th, 2019

Present: Nancy Brundage, Stacey Sahli, Nicholas Visingardi, Kat Paull, Mandy Smith, Peggy Palma

Old business:

Mrs. Palma read the minutes from Jan 17th, 2019 for review. Nancy Brundage made a motion to accept the minutes as written, second by Kat Paull. All say aye. Kat Paull assumed the position of Chair in Boyle's absence.

New business:

Mrs. Paull lead discussion on data regarding school attendance to different programs sponsored by the park. Mandy discussed that there are many programs and are trying to narrow down which ones are heavily attended and to ensure they are meeting the academic standards for the state of Ohio. Data collected from August 2018 – January 2019 was discussed.

Mrs. Paull asked Mandy Smith if our committee could recommend to the commissioners/educators to develop more programs for other grade levels. Mandy explained that is what they are currently trying to work on but there are too many people and some programs are not appropriate for the audiences they are presented to.

Kat Paull asked if they could shift preschoolers into a more appropriate program and advertise programs to the 1st and 2nd grade audiences that are more aligned to the state standards.

Mandy Smith suggested that educators be brought in to discuss programs and standards and see their perspective, so that the park's educators could meet their needs.

Kat Paull discussed "problems" with programs and how her students did not come back to the classroom with any information she was hoping they would.

Nick Visingardi asked how verse the educators are in reading and meeting standards in order to construct programs. Mandy mentioned there are five part time educators (one is leaving in June) and 1 full time educator. They have received raises but make between \$12-14 an hour and limited to 28 hours a week. Nick asked if turnover was a problem to which Mandy Smith said that prior groups were more difficult with less quality people but she is pleased with the knowledge of the current group. Kat Paull asked how long does a naturalist usually stay. Mandy Smith discussed that the current educators have 17 years, 6 years, 2 years, 1.5 years, 1.5 years when leaving, and 25 years for full time.

Nancy Brundage asked what kind of programs does Lynn do? Mandy Smith said that everyone does everything now. Kat Paull asked if it was difficult to train everyone in all the programs. Mandy Smith mentioned that it is nice that they all have information for all programs and are able to observe each other and co-lead the programs, eventually putting their own spin on things once they get comfortable. She also discussed that the educators should be diverse and learn how to teach different subjects and programs. This does take time for environmental

educators to grasp all the topics with all different grade levels. After all, they are educators, not teachers.

It was mentioned that the number of second grade programs is low as they try to make changes to the programs so they meet the standards.

Nick Visingardi asked if the educators could send information regarding the programs to teachers earlier for planning purposes.

It was asked which schools attend the programs and where they are located, whether in or out of Mahoning County. Nick Visingardi asked if this really matters to which the group responded yes for different reasons. Funds were a question but out of county schools pay to attend. It is also important for our goals in data collection so that we can meet the needs of all grade levels and student demographics.

We discussed advertising and how can the park get the word out to teachers about the programs that are offered and the changes that are coming. Kat Paull suggested a short video clip that could be sent to teachers, kind of like a commercial. Nick Visingardi suggested some social media outlets like Facebook and Instagram to draw in more of the younger generation.

In conclusion, Kat Paull thought it would be good for the educators to focus on one really good program and determine its response, assess it, and tweek it accordingly. Nick Visingardi even suggested pooling some retired teachers to volunteer a little time to help the educators.

Lastly, we discussed meeting times and planning for in the future. It was suggested that maybe we choose the same day in the month, like the second Thursday of each month (as an example) so that we can plan other “things” around that.

Tentative meeting date: Thursday May 16th and 5:30pm at Metropark Farms

Committee Time/Comments: none

Public comments to Committee: none

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