

**Neighbors of Northwest Branch
Minutes of Board Meeting
March 7, 2023**

1. Welcome

Present on Zoom: Nora Swisher, Anne Ambler, Kem Morawski, Matt Boyer, Melissa Schweisguth, Ben Simasek, Kristin Backert, Michael Evans.

2. Treasurer's report

The treasurer's report from Larry Hush shows a balance of \$9,574.87 of NNWB money and \$0 of Springsong funds which ends our fiscal relationship with Springsong. The board approved this.

3. Goals and Values 2023

One of the goals discussed at a previous meeting was getting activities listed earlier and a calendar on our website would help with that. Matt would like to work on the calendar that would have activities listed with links to information and registration.

Nora is to get a google drive. Matt found the person that helped Anne set this up originally and Jason said that he would help Matt work on getting this going.

So far, our community hikes have been successful. On the last hike, which Anne led, one of District 6 councilmember's staff participated. Kathy Michaels was there as well to lend her expertise on native and invasive plants.

Discussion--Nora and Michael: Because our numbers are modest, it is hard to do large projects which require subcommittees, etc. As we are small, we tend to respond/support/collaborate with other organizations' efforts. Perhaps we could identify 2 to 3 priorities/problems for the year and have a few events that specifically address these issues. Examples: invasive plants, run off/erosion, trash.

In addition, Kristin pointed out that we have not yet had speakers this year. It would be good to get back on a schedule to have speakers that would engage our community.

Ben has 3 more months with the Hyattsville City Council and will promote/support whatever is within the city's purview to protect the NW Branch such as tree planting, invasive plant removal and the bring your own bag ordinance. He is currently involved with an effort to get a Hyattsville Greenteam off the ground and is doing stenciling on Hyattsville storm drains March 25 (rain date the 26th).

4. Collaboration with local artist Jennifer Ridgway (yard dramas and puppet parades) [Spring Equinox to Earth Day Program](#)

Jennifer is an artist with an environmental message and has a 5-week program at the University Duck Pond Park near the Northwest Branch which leads up to Earth Day. She will lead cleanups every Saturday from 3/18 to 4/22. She has an open invitation to organizations such as ours to attend and distribute information about us. Nora will look into getting brochures printed.

5. Trash bills

Ben, as a member of the Hyattsville City Council, is the lead sponsor for a bag ban/fee measure. There would be a 10 cent charge for single use bags which the retailer would get. Ben hopes it is on the agenda for the next city council meeting on March 20. He thinks that it is likely to pass and go into effect January 2024. Melissa has drafted a letter for NNWB to send to the Mayor and City Council in support of the bag bill.

There is no plastic bag ban before the state. They are hoping local bills will be passed to change the climate and get people used to reusable bags so that it can be passed at the state level.

State trash bills:

Anne discussed 2 PFAS bills. One involves testing public utility water (effluent, influent, and biosolids) for PFAS. The House version of this bill was withdrawn by the sponsor, possibly to remove any conflict with the Senate version if it is amended.

The other bill would require that any pesticide registered in Maryland show proof that the amount of PFAS is below a certain level. The effective date applying to mosquito pesticides would precede the rest by 2 years.

According to their fiscal notes, both bills would require hiring additional state staff (at MD departments of the Environment and Agriculture respectively) and so would incur costs.

Another bill of interest is the beverage recycling/return bill with six cosponsors on the House side (no Senate bill). This involves a deposit on beverage containers which can be reclaimed when the container is returned to one of many drop sites. This approach has drastically reduced trash and increased recycling in those states with deposits. The higher the fee, the better the results. We signed onto a letter with Trash Free Maryland to support this bill. The Sierra Club has developed a support letter on the container deposit bill that directs comments to the appropriate delegates/senators based on the writer's address. It was suggested that Anne send a notice with a link to this letter to our listserv.

Synthetic turf. There is a bill addressing the chain of custody for synthetic turf which will track where it goes. This turf is good for 8 to 10 years but when it is taken out some fields have been getting dumped, some near rivers. The chain of custody will track who is dumping where. An amendment exempts synthetic turf fields of less 5,000 square feet.

An idea was floated that a good speaker session might be to have someone (League of Conservation Voters? Nature Forward?) talk about how the legislature/bills work.

6. Events

Earth Day is coming up, April 22. We will not be having a booth at Brookside but Anne will ask Kit Gage of FOSC if we can have brochures on her table.

7. Miscellaneous

Website maintenance--Melissa will maintain our website. Anne, Nora, and Melissa need to work out how to get Anne's credit card off the website and onto someone else's. Anne will cancel the .com.

Rebecca Henson was on temporary leave from the board while we were administering Springsong funds so that there would be no conflict of interest. Since NNWB is no longer fiscally involved, we all voted to ask her to return.

Since everyone on the NNWB board is in the middle of their 2-year terms on the board, we will not be holding Board elections in March. Leadership positions will be voted on in April, including deciding who is to take minutes (Secretary role).