

Neighbors of North West Branch (NNWB)
Minutes of Board Meeting
August 3, 2021

1. Welcome:

Present on Zoom: Anne Ambler, Kem Morawski, Rebecca Henson, Ben Simasek, Julie Keenahan, FOSC liaison Edward Murtagh.

- 2. Treasurer's report** from Larry Hush was approved by the board members. Our total balance as of August 3 is \$5,302.79.

3. Updates:

Water quality monitoring: At Burnt Mills water quality was bad after the rain we had, although June 16 was worse than July 28. Email to our member database about our monitoring got a lot of comments. Anacostia Riverkeeper posts water quality results online. When we tested in the NW Branch at Lane Manor last summer it was consistently high in E-coli. Sligo Creek is consistently bad as well. Possible sources: dog poop, human sewage, geese poop. Do we want to ask for a test that breaks out the sources of E-coli? Kem is to contact Anacostia Riverkeeper and see whether they can do that and how much they would charge. It is possible to manage storm water ponds to discourage geese by letting plants grow wild around the ponds as geese don't like the overgrowth.

Rachel Carson discovery center is now officially a 501 C(3) (it was held up last year because of Covid). (Formally Rachel Carson Place of Wonder, PoW, www.rcpow.org) Rebecca opened a bank account for it. She has been in contact with Councilmember Evan Glass's office, and Council President Tom Hucker but has not heard anything from them lately. They are both supportive of this project and want to bring in state delegates as well.

Rebecca has exchanged emailed with the staff of the US Fish and Wildlife Service's National Conservation Training Center (USFWS) Shepherdstown. They have some of Rachel Carson's papers and would like to talk about partnership opportunities with the Discovery Center,

regarding either tangible items or programs. They are in a process of setting up a meeting.

We discussed aspects of the White Oak Master Plan from 2014 that affect Burnt Mills. The url for the plan is:

https://www.montgomeryplanning.org/community/wosg/documents/approved_and_adopted_final.pdf

A pertinent paragraph from this document regarding the Burnt Mills buildings which potentially would house the Discovery Center/Rachael Carson Museum is:

“The Robert B. Morse Filtration Plant Buildings (built in 1936, and also known as the WSSC buildings) are both owned by the M-NCPPC Parks Department, which recommends that they be considered for a “directed partnership,” to explore adaptive reuse of the structures as well as improvements to environmental conditions at Northwest Branch. Coordination with the Historic Preservation Commission and the Maryland Department of the Environment is essential due to the buildings’ historic designation as well as the potential for dam and stream restoration.”

State of Streams project by the Audubon Naturalist Society in which NNWB is participating; payment to go to NNWB. Kem, Anne, and James were at the first meeting, and Kem and Anne attended the second. We talked about various uses of parks (involved are people from NWB, Watts Branch, and Oxen Hill Run.) and identified areas that we could get indicators for: access to nature, water quality, climate resilience, and biodiversity. At one point there was a concept of neighborhood feedback regarding how these streams were used, but no mention of it lately. Anne to ask about this at next meeting which is August 13.

4. **Summer Activities:**

Anacostia River boat trip--everyone who went on the boat trip on July 17 said they enjoyed it. It was led by naturalist Robinne Gray of the Anacostia Watershed Society (AWS). Do we want to plan another trip? If so, we will need to advertise it on the Facebook page and on neighborhood listservs. Perhaps in October when it is not so hot? Anne is to talk to AWS about this.

Julie suggested a kayak trip in the fall as well and will contact Prince Georges' Park staff to discuss possibilities of kayak rental.

5. **Fall Activities:**

Programs/meetings-- Zoom or meet in person? We would need masks indoors. Anne's Zoom contract expires in December. We decided to keep meeting via Zoom until December and then see where we are re the virus.

Hike to Rachel Carson's house. Rebecca has been in touch with Dr. Diana Post of the Rachael Carson Landmark Alliance and they will open the house for us to come for visit in October, masks required. Rebecca is to ask them if they can do it on October 16 and if not, come up with 2 to 3 weekend dates. There is a 20 person limit. The hike will be from Burnt Mills to the Rachael Carson House.

Clean-ups—Dates, leaders.

Ben will lead a clean-up at Lane Manor off University Blvd. on Oct. 2nd.

Kem will lead a clean-up at Burnt Mill on Nov. 6th at Burnt Mills. Anne or someone will lead one, perhaps at Alderton Rd. or somewhere else, on the same day.

Educational program ideas:

Friends of Sligo Creek (FOSC) had a program on the Army Corps of Engineers' fish barrier removal projects, which included stretches of the Northwest Branch as well as Sligo Creek. To learn just what the plans are, the board voted to invite the FOSC speaker, or someone else with knowledge of the plans, to speak at our November 2 meeting.

6. **Outreach:**

Calling cards for the Board members to hand out?

We are in favor of this. Cards would have the organization's name, a blurb about us and our website, Facebook, and Instagram addresses. Maurie Kathan, a former board member, set up an Instagram account for us to use, but Anne thinks it is not active. Julie will look into whether

we can use this, or if not, will set up an account for us. Anne will send Julie Maurie's email address to check with her.

7. Other:

In Wheaton Regional Park, they paved a gravel service road between Pine Lake and the dog park. They evened the grade for ADA accessibility and built bioretention depressions on either side of the path at the top of the hill. Ed suggested they are probably sand filtration systems. They are clearly not working to prevent erosion downhill, as there is really bad erosion alongside asphalt road. Anne suggests posting photos on FB. Apparently Parks pay more attention to Face Book than complaints to park staff.

Ed complained to MC Parks that the sand filtration system near the ice rink at Wheaton Regional Park that treats the water from the parking lot was not getting any water because a snow plow destroyed the diverter last winter. It was finally fixed.

Larry Hush suggested a letter to MC Parks about the new graffiti at Burnt Mills and to put in an official request, again, for a recycling bin there. Anne will contact them. The board advised against putting any graffiti pictures on our Facebook page since that could serve as encouragement rather than DIScouragement to those involved in producing the graffiti.

Hyattsville planned development, updates from Ben and Anne. We discussed the planned development of Suffragette Pointe which is to be built in the floodplain adjacent to Driskell Park which abuts the NW Branch near the confluence. The Hyattsville City Council opposes the development but the County Council is in favor. The city is suing the developer.

The issues relate in part to procedural errors in the development review and also have to do with the approved development's land use conflicting with the underlying zoning and the sector plan for this area. Stormwater mitigation is also a point of contention. Greg Smith is a Hyattsville resident who has been leading a citizen's group that has filed their own lawsuit. He has asserted that the developer has proceeded without the proper permits and is keeping Anne up to date on this. NNWB is a party of record in the

complaints brought against this developer because of the adverse impacts to the Northwest Branch--eroded soils flowing into the NWB, increased impervious surfaces, and half the project to be built in the floodplain.

Some good news is that an application for development of 13 acres of forested land near NW/NE branch was denied.

8. Our next board meeting will be **September 7**.