

Neighbors of Northwest Branch
Minutes of Board Meeting
May 4, 2021

1. Welcome:

Present on Zoom: Anne Ambler, Michael Evans, Kristen Backert, Kem Morawski, James Graham, Laura Barnitz, Rebecca Henson, Julie Ufford Keenahan, Ben Simasek

2. Election of Board Members:

Welcome to new Board Members Rebecca Henson, Julie Keenahan and Ben Simasek.

Anne Ambler was voted in as President; James Graham as Vice-President; Kem Morawski as Secretary. Larry Hush said he would continue on as Treasurer.

3. Treasurer's Report (from Larry Hush):

We took in \$575.

Disbursements were \$72.50.

After a final payment of \$57.05 we are done with Blackbaud (E-tapestry-the program we were using for our database. We replaced the mail function with MailerLite; donation records and the ability to send paper thank-yous from a database were not replaced).

Our balance is \$5,087.84.

The treasurer's report was approved by the board.

4. Reports from clean-up leaders from April:

Michael and Kristen led the clean-up on Alderton Rd. near Bonifant with a total of 10 people and it went well. Lots of trash.

James and Kem led the clean up near the West Hyattsville metro from Queen's Chapel Rd. to Chillum Park. Lots of trash. 15 out of 25 signed up showed up. This one was in conjunction with the Anacostia Watershed Society. Prince George's Parks gave us a dumpster and there was also a park ranger to pick up the bagged trash along the trail and take it to the dumpster. Finding the site was a bit difficult for some people as there is construction and the parking lot is closed off. If we do it again, take more signage.

The footbridge there over NWB is still not operational. Make inquiry to Parks as to when it will be fixed.

Ben led an Anacostia Watershed Society Earth Day clean-up in Lane Manor Park on University Blvd. with 36 participants—a lot of trash including a lot in the stormwater pond.

Ben noted that there is a Latin Heritage Fall Festival there in September. [Link: <http://www.pgparcs.com/759/About-the-Hispanic-Festival>] He would like to do another clean-up after that, as well as a clean-up after the 4th of July celebration.

Apparently there is much trash trapped by logs in the mainstem near the Lamberton tributary. Anne to check it out. She thinks we will need waders as this is in the water. We should invest in more waders.

5. Water Monitoring at Burnt Mills:

Water monitoring for Anacostia Riverkeeper in Montgomery County coming up; the one in DC starts this week. Kem, Anne, Julie, and Rebecca are interested in participating. ARK got a grant and was able to add 5 sites further upstream from their other monitoring sites. These are 1 on Long Branch, 3 on Sligo Creek, and 1 on NW Branch at Burnt Mills, downstream from Colesville Rd.

6. Excessive street salt in Springbrook Forest (and other places as well)—worth a letter to Department of Environmental Protection (DEP)? This may also be a problem in Prince George's County. Magnesium chloride is less harmful but more expensive. Montgomery County is also using liquid spray on the roads.

Suzanne Donahue has monitored the river for salt in the past using the Izaak Walton League Salt Watch kit. Anne said she did not do it last winter, but will resume next winter. This could provide data to present to the county. James is also involved with Salt Watchers (a program of the Izaak Walton League).

We decided it would be useful to send a letter of concern to the MoCo DEP, to be followed by a letter next winter with data. In addition to monitoring salt levels in the NWB, this winter we should ask our members to take photos of salt piles as documentation to bolster the case.

7. Summer activities to engage more people? Committees?

Rebecca to form a committee to look into making a permanent Rachel Carson museum in the former WSSC building at Burnt Mills East Special Park. Anne suggested that we might have a better chance for success if we ask for only part of the building space, leaving space for other Montgomery Parks activities.

Water quality monitoring. Training new volunteer water monitors will begin soon. The link to sign up is on our Homepage. Water monitors from last summer need to take a recertification test and sign a new waiver.

Ben agreed to be our liaison to the Hyattsville Environmental Committee. There are a lot of invasive plants that need removal and the city arborist is applying for a grant to get more trees planted. Ben is to think about what outreach with Hyattsville will look like.

Various areas to look at/think about for summer activities:

Frog watch

Water watch

Hikes possibilities:

Sandy Spring Underground Railroad hike in June?

Rachael Carson trail hike. They usually have their annual Carson open house in May, but we don't know if they are doing that this year because of the pandemic. Rebecca to talk to someone in the Rachael Carson Landmark Alliance to see if they would open up the house to a smaller group if we led a hike that ends at her house.

8. Program ideas?

Probably water quality report.

Julie to look into options for a program/involvement with Native American groups in the area.

9. Diversity outreach was discussed.

10. Meetings to the end of 2021:

June 1, August 3, September 7, October 5, November 2, December 7.