

Neighbors of Northwest Branch (NNWB)
Minutes of Board Meeting
September 7, 2021

1. Welcome:

Present on Zoom: Anne Ambler, Kem Morawski, Rebecca Henson, Ben Simasek, Julie Keenahan, James Graham, Michael Evans, Kristin Backert.

2. Treasurer's report

Anne reported our current balance as \$5,989.52. She will forward the treasurer's report from Larry Hush when she receives it. We received an unexpected \$500 from Anacostia Riverkeeper for our participation in water quality monitoring.

3. Quick Updates:

Anne received the business cards and we will distribute them to the board members. (Reminder: Michael, Kristin, and Julie to get them at Anne's house, Kem to get cards for her, Rebecca, and James. Anne to give Ben his when she sees him at the October 2 clean up.)

Several people have contacted Anne—some to join listserv and some to see how they could get involved. Anne is meeting with one on Thursday to discuss involvement.

Anne mentioned that Thursday evening, from 7-9, Montgomery Parks is introducing the draft for the master plan for Wheaton Regional Park. She will send info to Julie and Kem.

Julie says we have 19 followers on Instagram now but we need to make the account more active.

Julie also has contacted the Native American tribe to whom we had discussed reaching out, but their museum is closed and they don't seem too interested in engaging right now. She recommended we follow their Instagram account and share information with them to develop a relationship. Perhaps we can reach out to them again in the spring.

4. Storm damage to NWB and RC trails. Need to report & monitor fixes.

Anne contacted Parks about severe erosion on the RC trail behind Springbrook H.S. (with photos), and they were already aware and were fixing it.

5. **Stream clean ups:**

Saturday, October 2nd:

3 - 5 p.m., University Hills Duck Pond & Lane Manor Park. Meet at the Duck Pond, at 3400 Stanford St., **Hyattsville**. Ben is to lead the cleanup in the afternoon when more people are in the park so it will be more visible to people. What is the protocol for Prince George Parks? Apparently one signs up through a volunteer portal. Ben will get more information. He will have additional covid waivers on hand at the park.

Saturday, October 2nd:

10 - noon, **Burnt Mills East**. Montgomery County is in the process of revising/redoing their protocols. Pretty sure it will be 10 people per leader still. We plan on having 2 groups led by Kem and someone else. Anne will send the MC protocol link when she receives it.

Saturday, Nov. 6:

Near **Alderton Rd.** 10 – noon. Anne to lead clean up. Starts at end of NWB Trail on Alderton Rd. The cleanup area runs below current Bonifant Rd. and under the spans of the ICC. The trail uses the old Bonifant Rd. bridge to cross the NWB. Anne will post the registration link as soon as she gets it from Montgomery Parks.

6. **Saturday, October 16, 9:30 - noon:** Hike from Burnt Mills West (dam side) to the house where Rachel Carson lived and wrote. How to handle **Rachel Carson hike** on 10/16 since group is limited to 20? Rebecca agreed to have people email her to sign up. Anne to put Rebecca's email on website.
7. **Anacostia River Boat trip (10/23)** 10 to noon. The registration is handled by Anacostia Watershed Society, so no action needed aside from putting the information on our website and advertising through email.
8. **Nov. 2 program, 7:30-9:15:** The Army Corps of Engineers project manager for fish barrier removals planned on NWB and Sligo Creek has agreed to speak to us about the projects, via Zoom. A publicity person will help to develop the presentation. We decided to specifically invite the

publicity person to participate as well. Q & A to be included. Anne asked him to cover the origin of the projects (the Anacostia Watershed Restoration Partnership report, which contained an extensive list of remediations), what is planned, and which migratory fish are expected to benefit. Zoom link will be sent to listserv and database.

9. Ben and Anne talked about the case presented today by the City of **Hyattsville** against Werrlein Properties. Anne watched the presentations. Werrlein seeks to build houses and townhouses on both sides of Gallatin Rd. One side is in the NWB 100-yr floodplain. NNWB is a “party of record” because of the potential impact on the NWB. Werrlein Properties demolished the WSSC building on the upper parcel without a permit and continued other activity as well without appropriate permits. The Prince George’s County Council (possibly illegally) rezoned the property to accommodate the developer and approved the project despite flagrant violations, including more planned units than even the new zoning allows, given that the flood plain area must be excluded.

The developer brought the plan to the City of Hyattsville piece meal, so the city council didn’t have a good idea of the overall project until later.

Compensatory stormwater mitigation is required, so it is possible that the big park nearby would become a stormwater pond. Stormwater has run over rubble piles and dirt washing it into the branch. Although the Army Corp of Engineers straightened the river long ago and confined it between high berms, there is a concern that dangerous flooding could occur if units are built on or too close to the floodplain.

The violations committed by the developer should be enough to stop them, but the counsel for the developer said that because they had already begun construction, the city can’t stop them. The other side said that nothing is built yet so they can be ordered to stop.

This is in the arts and recreation zone district. Hyattsville intended to expand Driscoll Park on the banks of the NWB and create a better natural world presentation, educational, and recreational space by acquiring that lower parcel in the floodplain.

It is unknown when the court will make a decision.

10. December meeting date is 12/7. The Board meeting will include discussion for plans for early spring, a program, and March board election. We will

continue zooming as it is paid for until the end of the year, but need to decide by November if we want to pay for Zoom after that or meet in person.

We do not usually meet in January as it is too close to the holidays but James suggested that we try to get something going for Martin Luther King, Jr. day in January which is a service day. Can we get people out doing things along the stream? Or if it is too cold, perhaps we can plan an indoor program, for example, putting together bird and bat boxes.