

Friends of Scarlett Mitchell Woods - Meeting of the Members and the Board of Directors

October 17, 2024 – 7:30 PM

MINUTES

Present: Michael Benham, Pat Frey, Phil Huhn, Autumn Jackson, Caroline McCreary, Bill McNitt, Judy Schmidt, Manfred Schmidt, Julie Steiff

1. Hellos / Introductions as needed: None needed
0. Adoption / Modification of Agenda: Agenda adopted.
- 3) Approval of Minutes of Prior Meeting: Send Julie S any requests for revisions.
- 4) News and Announcements:
 - AJ noticed a signpost that has fallen over. It had rotted at the base.
 - PF (Treasurer) reported that our CD is maturing next week. She will continue to renew it every three months. The value of volunteer time has increased to \$33/hour, so we now have \$10,208 worth of volunteer hours.
 - MB said he and PH have researched boardwalk designs to replace the decaying boardwalk near the pond. They will share plans for an economical solution later.
 - MB announced an upcoming volunteer opportunity at Buhr Park, where they will begin planting a pocket forest. He will send information.
 - PF reported that Nature Club has been meeting every week. All is going well, and everyone is having a good time. They cracked walnuts and collected hickory nuts. One girl found four blue-spotted salamanders! PF shared some photos.
 - Judy S gave updates on upcoming activities.
- 5) Old Business
 - Friends Logo – AJ sent a survey presenting some options and asked us to respond. Once we've selected a design, AJ will print up business cards. MB thanked AJ for the great work and said we'll decide at the next meeting.
- 6) New Business
 - "Exit Ramp" Plan – PF shared a map of new "exit ramps" (unofficial trails created by people taking shortcuts, or even by deer). She doesn't like them, as they can contribute to confusion and getting lost. She recommends not clearing them when we maintain the official trails. MB agreed we should preserve the integrity of the existing trail map. He urged us to block the shortcuts with logs or branches. Julie S agreed. Judy S suggested doing just one first to see how people react to it. Pat agreed.
 - FSMW Strategic Plan – MB asked: What would we like the woods to look like in 5, 10, 20 years?

ECOLOGICAL VISION

Summary of proposed vision: 1) Create a property that is dominated by native plants by removing invasives and adding native species. 2) Maintain the health of the marsh and pond.

Detailed discussion: Judy S would like to see fewer invasives with seeds (e.g., buckthorn, honeysuckle, Norway maples). We should work toward getting rid of those. There's a place in the west section where there's nothing but buckthorn—she'd like to get rid of it. PH would also like to see that buckthorn gone.

Judy S said that near Old Ellsworth, there's a place where we could have a wildflower garden, but we would need to get rid of the invasives to encourage the wildflowers.

PF said it would be nice to get rid of poison ivy. Judy S pointed out that it's native and said we should just keep it away from the benches. MB agreed that poison ivy is not invasive.

MB said that Oriental bittersweet and garlic mustard also need to be controlled. Judy S said we're staying on top of the garlic mustard.

MB proposed setting the goal of a piece of property that is dominated by native plants.

PF noted that the center part of the woods contains old hickory and oak—unlike the City-owned parts. Should we work toward making the east and west parts more like the middle part? Judy S would like to see that.

MB agreed that we should plant native plants as well as remove invasives. We could plant trees and/or shrubs. Judy S said we would need to consult with experts.

Another ecological goal is to maintain the health of pond and marsh.

RECREATIONAL GOALS

We listed activities people can do in the woods: skiing (if there's enough snow), ice skating (when conditions are right), mushroom hunting, bird watching, hiking, and dog walking.

Judy S wondered if we should have a special workday for dog walkers—they use the woods and might want to give back. PF suggested an ice-skating event like the one they have at Thurston Pond. Judy S noted that we get better attendance at workdays than at other events.

AJ said that Turnberry residents would use the Woods more if they had better access and a clearer entrance. MB said that raised the question of how much to focus on City property vs. hounding the City to maintain it (the Turnberry entrance is on City property). Judy S suggested a nature walk for Turnberry residents in the spring.

EDUCATIONAL GOALS

Judy S. said that nature walks are educational. So is the kiosk (Judy S invited others to contribute). MS suggested putting up a display at the Turnberry entrance. Judy S said that would be good as long as the display was maintained and changed regularly.

PF described how the schools use the woods. AAPS's environmental education program takes students to the woods. A lot of Mitchell teachers take their classes there as well. Other Scarlett teachers would also like to use the woods and have requested trail maps. XC teams run through the woods.

There's potential for even more school involvement. For example, another school has an annual workday with students. MB said it would be interesting to learn more about what teachers do. PF volunteered to find out more about how Scarlett teachers use the woods. Judy S will do the same for Mitchell.

OPEN DISCUSSION

Judy S loved the sunrise walk and would like to do more of them.

MB asked if we should apply for grants. What if we could get \$1000 worth of trees to plant? MB has seen opportunities. Judy asked if Stewardship Network was a good resource for finding grants. MB said the County Conservation District may also have opportunities. MB noted that we have impressive record and a lot of volunteer hours, which positions us well to apply for grants. AJ has experience in grant management, and she offered to help.

MB asked whether we should worry about development on any of the property. We know who owns it, but do we know how committed they are to maintaining it as a nature area? At Thurston, AAPS is planning to build on part of the nature area where people had invested thousands of hours.

MB brought up the new residential development on Platt—it is ecologically damaging, and it might bring more people to the woods.

MB thinks the pond really needs a name and proposed to name it "Manfred's Pond." Judy S said that Will [last name?] was also involved in creating the pond and suggested calling it "Manfred and Will's Pond."

PF thanked MB for leading us in the strategic planning effort.

PH asked us to look at the mission statement on the "About" page on our website.

7) Next Meeting: Thursday, November 21 at 7:30

8) The meeting adjourned.

Meetings submitted by Julie Steiff.

