

ODWNA Association Meeting Minutes

Date: Wednesday, April 19, 2023

Place: Third Christian Reformed Church – Small Conference Room

Board Members:

Present: Chris Shook, Vice President; Christopher Bovid, Secretary; Kathy Shook, Treasurer; Eric Boersma; Diana Morton-Thompson, Paul Scott

Excused: Peter Kushner

In Attendance: Approximately 53 people (includes Board members)



I. Call to Order: Chris Shook, Vice-President, 7:00 pm

A. Welcome

1. Sign in sheet going around
2. eNews (1x/monthly; put your email on sheet if you'd like to receive it)
3. Website URL (timely neigh. & city information, N.Plan)
4. Can always reach our board via email, links are on website

B. Misc. Announcements – All details & links on our website/eNews

1. KZO Marathon - Sunday 4/23 AM
 - a. Neigh. roads open but runners will have the right of way
 - b. Zieglerkalamazoomarathon.com for details & map
2. 11th annual car show – next meeting (W 5/17)
 - a. In front of Winchell elem. 7pm-8:30pm
 - b. Our way to kick off summer & let neighbors gather and meet
 - c. Fire engine, Camzie's Pizza

C. Winchell Grant

1. 3rd Christ. Reformed Church leadership is donating \$5,000 total that they named the Winchell Grant. "This grant is designed for all residents of Winchell (and for organizations in Winchell) and for members of our church who want to do a public good project for the neighborhood and within the neighborhood."
2. \$5k total – indiv's / groups can of course apply for amounts less than that
3. Details on our website and their website – or see Agshin after the meeting

D. Other events & information can be found on our website

E. Overview by Diana Morton-Thompson of the Board of Director's understanding (so far) of the City's proposed rezoning of the parcels on the SW corner of Stadium Drive and Drake Road

1. An attendee asked whether the Board of Directors has or plans to make a position statement to the City
 - a. The Board of Directors had previously issued a written position statement to the City several years ago in response to DNS Stadium Drive LLC's requested zoning change. Concerning the current proposed zoning and ordinance language changes, the Board of Directors still has more questions and needs more information from the City Planner.
 - b. Further review of the proposed zoning and ordinance language changes will be at the next Board of Directors meeting in May.

F. Nominating Committee report (Chris Bovid): 13 people applied to be nominated; not all applicants completed the process; of those that did, all but two were nominated and are on the ballot. An email was also sent to the Board of Directors late last night by some members asking several questions about the "record date" for purposes of establishing which members can vote as well as inquiring about certain section of the Michigan Nonprofit Corporation Act concerning corporation acts without an annual meeting and seeking appointment of an inspector of elections. Given the late hour of the email no one has had enough time today to thoroughly review or prepare detailed responses to the questions but generally speaking, the Michigan Nonprofit Corporation Act defaults to the "record date" being the close of business the day before the Notice of Annual Meeting is sent out. That is likely to be next week with the specific day depending on when we can get the Notice of Annual Meeting sent out. The questions regarding sections of the Michigan Nonprofit Corporation Act concerning corporation action without an Annual Meeting do not apply in this situation since there will be a properly noticed annual meeting for the ODWNA. Inspectors of elections can be requested but there is no requirement for the ODWNA to have one under Michigan law or the ODWNA Constitution and engaging in that process might unnecessarily complicate what is otherwise a simple electronic ballot submission process. Regardless, the Board of Directors can determine whether to pursue that.

G. ODWNA Treasurer's Report (presented by K. Shook). Copies of the Monthly Balance Sheet are available for taking. The balance in ODWNA checking account is, at last check, \$9,484.61. We had 10 new voting members during that month. Four of our six eNews sponsors have paid. Tonight we have received more membership dues so the balance will presumably increase by next month.

II. New Business

- A. An attendee suggested that it might be helpful to have name placards for the board members at future meetings.

III. Introduction of Guest Speaker: Donna Perry Keller; Evolution of A Naturalist; From Lawn Love to Native Gardener

- A. Acknowledgment of Ancestral Land on which the ODWN and City of Kalamazoo are located
- B. Donna grew up in a house with a big expansive lawn and watched and listened as her parents worked hard to take care of their lawn, which it was the responsibility of good neighbors to do.

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- C. Also grew up on family property in Delton, MI on a wood lot that her family calls "The Farm." They cut, split, hauled, and stacked wood. Her relationship to trees growing up was fairly transactional.
- D. She began to appreciate trees in a different way as she spent time with her dad, who was a lover of trees (his favorites were two tulip-poplars).
- E. Her husband grew up in another city and their family had a nice lawn and took care of it.
- F. Their first home as a married couple was in the Winchell Neighborhood and they spent a lot of time taking care of the lawn.
- G. They outgrew that house and moved into another one with a larger land area with woods in the back.
- H. After raising twins, Donna joined the Stewards of Kleinstuck, which does a lot of work to remove introduced / invasive plants. One of the big invasives she learned about was a Norway Maple (leaf out early, have thick leaves, all of which prevent sunlight getting to the ground below, preventing trillium, etc.). Bumblebee queens are some of the first insects to emerge in the spring and without flowers and food to eat, the bee populations are prevented from thriving.
- I. Donna went home and she and her husband and son took about about 60 Norway Maples from their property. They were happy to discover a carpet of vinca vine and English Ivy - - until she went to the next Stewards of Kleinstuck workday and found that those, too, are invasive plants.
- J. Donna came home from the workday and she and her family started removing all of the vinca and ivy, which battle continues today.
- K. Donna then started a new hobby of bird watching and when there was not a bird flying by, the people she was with talked with her about the plants on the trail. Donna recommends going on the trail by F or G Avenue to see the native wildflowers there.
- L. Ilsa Gebhardt is known locally as the "butterfly lady" establishing monarch waystations. As part of working with her, Donna needed to learn stages of caterpillar development, etc.
- M. A naturalist evolves by going to one event and then takes steps to improve things and then finds more to improve.
- N. Donna read several books
 - 1. The Overstory by Richard Powers – fiction, novel; very thought provoking.
 - 2. Nature's Best Hope by Douglas Tallamy – "If every landowner, public and private, converted half of their lawns to native plants, it would be the largest national park." See HomegrownNationalPark.org
 - a. Its focus is on the need for natural area connectivity and dangers without that connectivity.
 - b. There is not enough protected land to do what we need to do.
 - c. Communication of the dire need to increase and connect natural areas is important.
 - d. 85% of lands east of the Mississippi are privately owned.
 - e. Biggest obstacle to connecting natural areas is that people have and like lawns. Turf grass has replaced natural areas to the tune of 40 million acres and we are adding about 500 square miles of turf grass per year. Turf grass lawn irrigation consumes more than 8 billion gallons of water daily and is not sustainable. 40% of the chemicals used in lawn care in the U.S. are banned in other countries as they are carcinogens. Americans spend more than \$3 billion hours per year working on their lawns. Insects and pollinators and birds don't get much out of lawns.
 - f. We are compelled to remove leaves from our lawns but we do not need to remove all of them. If you leave some of them, insects will thank you.
 - g. We need to stop thinking about what we like most and instead think about what might benefit other insects and mammals.
 - h. If the Winchell Neighborhood embraced Tallamy's concepts of converting half of our lawns to native gardens, imagine the stepping stones of connectivity to allow diverse insects and other creatures to survive at other rates.
 - i. Tallamy often quotes E.O. Wilson, a famous entomologist and author.
 - j. Insects provide the main means by which food is provided to animals (convert plant sugars to proteins and fats, and those go on to fuel the complex food webs).
 - k. Before heavy settlement in Michigan, there was a lot of woodlands and forests. Then much was converted to farm lands. Now much of that is being converted to residential areas with turf grass lawns.
 - 3. The Nature of Oaks – Douglas Tallamy; Digs deep into keystone species (specifically, the Oak). Think about how often we need to clean bugs off the windshield on long road trips now versus how often it was necessary years ago. Insect populations have declined dramatically.
 - a. 2.0 billion birds are gone since 1970. Oaks are the top life support trees in 84% of counties in North America. They host hundreds of species of moths and butterflies compared to other trees. Birds prefer that you plant an oak tree to feeding them bird seed.
 - b. WMU Biology Professor Dr. Richard Brewer did a study in 1961 where he counted caterpillars that nesting chickadees took to their nests. Over a typical nesting period, it was 6000 – 9000 caterpillars per nest. Bird feeders can't help with that.
 - c. Migrating birds also need caterpillars. Having flown hundreds of miles and needing to refuel
 - d. Oaks filter storm water, sink block wind and provide shade,
 - 4. Finding The Mother Tree – Suzanne Simard; Research about trees are connected and in some ways, communicate with one another. Years of subsequent work by her and her grad students indicate that

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communication happens not just between members of the same species but across multiple species (“a tapestry of connectivity”). She noticed that Douglas Fir seedlings could be found around the drip line of a tree. Closer to the base, they did not grow. She surmised that the mother tree used what it needed at the base and left enough at the edges that they could get what they needed to survive. As the mother trees die, they send out increased carbon and nitrogen and other supports to area saplings with one long, last boost. She started to think of these connections like neural networks in the brain.

5. Donna would recommend that if you only read one of these four books, read “Nature’s Best Hope.” Then in order to implement the concepts from the book, she recommends Using Native Plants To Restore Community – Tom Small (who lives in the Winchell Neighborhood). It contains fun and interesting ways to do the work.
 - O. Donna is not at the beginning of her journey but not at the end, either. She gets new native plants each year. Overview of a number of the plants they have in their yard now. They do still have some lawns but do try to decrease it a little each year.
 - P. There is reason for hope.
 - Q. Deer are a problem – Donna uses “Deer Out” as a repellent. She buys it in a concentrate and mixes it in a spray bottle and sprays the wildflowers in the backyard in the evenings. Also, talk to Chris and/or Kathy Shook if you want an all-natural deer repellent recipe (although it must be done more often than Deer Out.
 - R. There was a Google Group formed as a result of the Neighborhood Read of Nature’s Best Hope. Donna is passing around a list if people want to sign up to receive notices about it.
 - S. Things that Donna once saw as beautiful are not what she appreciates anymore. It is a paradigm shift because she has been paying attention differently.
 - T. If we can do more things to promote ecosystems with animals, birds, and insects, let’s do it.
 - U. Donna and Rob Keller are hosting an event to see the spring ephemeral wildflowers will be blooming on Sunday, May 7, from 5-7pm.

IV. **Quick Informal Survey:**

Chris Shook: By a show of hands – who of the attendees at this meeting opposes the proposed rezoning of the property at the SE corner of Stadium Drive and Drake Road? It appears all hands went up.

V. **Other Announcements:**

- A. This Saturday, April 22, 2023 is Earth Day. Within the Winchell Neighborhood there is a celebration planned from 2-4pm at Woods Lake Park on Oakland Drive. There will be food, music, and tables by local groups.
- B. Wild Ones is having a native plant sale and native plant exchange. It is the 30th anniversary of this native plant exchange. It will be at Tom Small’s house on Sunday June 4, 2023 with tours of their yard. No money changes hands. You do not need to bring a plant but you do need to take one and promise to care for it.

VI. **Adjournment:** 8:48 pm

Respectfully Submitted,
Christopher Bovid, ODWNA Secretary