

The Friends of Presqu'ile Park
Minutes Annual General Meeting
June 1, 2019

(Approved September 10, 2020 AGM)

Board Chair Bev Cook called the meeting to order at 10:30 am. Over 60 members were in attendance, so there was a quorum.

Agenda – Moved by Phil McRae and seconded by Larry Knudson that the agenda be approved as presented. Carried.

Opening Comments – Bev Cook showed slides outlining the Friends' mission and vision. Although these have been in place for some time, they continue to be as relevant today.

Minutes of Previous Meeting – June 2, 2018 – It was moved by David Crouch and seconded by Tim Lawley that the minutes as published be approved. Carried.

Greetings from the Municipality of Brighton

Mayor Brian Ostrander brought greetings from council and thanked the Friends for their service to the community such as the school programs and the accessible beach walkway. Bev indicated that councillor Mary Tadman was also present and thanked Brian and Mary for their support.

2018 Accomplishments

The Chair outlined some of the key accomplishments of the various projects that support our Mission. They cover Education and Interpretation, Environmental Initiatives, Infrastructure Enhancement, Fundraising and Management.

Education and Interpretation – In 2018 almost 2,300 students from public, Catholic, and private schools, as well as those who are home schooled, had the opportunity to experience nature and the Park. This program is doing an amazing job of making nature real and fun to kids. We also ran another series of Kids N Nature camps to allow over 100 children the fun of a week in the park. This program has been replaced by a new Outreach Program for 2019.

Last year's Natural Heritage Education program attracted over 10,000 visitors to the Nature Centre. In addition, about 175 Interpretive Programs were delivered to over 9,000 visitors. Programs take place at various locations in the Park. The Friends subsidize about a third of the staff salaries for the Education & Interpretive Programs. Our volunteers also supplement the interpreter activities.

Education Outreach Program – Janine McClintock reported on the plans for the summer outreach program – Presqu’ile to You. It will offer programs at various community and park venues. There will be a regular weekly session at the local Library. Moving forward, the Friends wants to know what types of programs would appeal to members. An informal survey was distributed. The results will help to shape community offerings in the future.

Environmental Initiatives - The team continues to assist the Park staff with the removal of invasive species and the planting of native trees. The Friends provided a mobile technology device to allow for the mapping of invasive species. We also supported the mapping of dead and diseased Ash trees to mark those that must be removed for safety’s sake. We support the butterfly banding program and provide bird seed.

Dr. Jennifer Arnold presented a series of Common Tern slides. Jennifer and Stephen have been studying the Common Tern habitat and habits since 2008. Colonies of Common Terns located by seawater are doing fine but freshwater colonies have declined by over 70%. Presqu'ile is the last breeding area in the lower Great Lakes. At one time this colony was over 10,000 pairs strong. Jennifer and Stephen are trying to increase the colony with the introduction of protective systems. They work with interns like Alexis, who also help with park programs. Nocturnal predators have been reducing the population. The group has been studying sleep behaviour. The exclusion grid was destroyed by flooding in 2017. 2018 looked like a good year with 80 chicks until a Night Heron killed all but 15. The park increased the height of the exclusion enclosure to double the height. Flooding has again destroyed a good portion of the enclosure. However, there are 56 nests on a narrow strip of land. Nano GPS and Loggers will be used once the birds are established, to study their habits. Jennifer thanked the Friends and the Park for the continuing support.

Infrastructure Enhancements – The Friends have an amazing Trail Repair Team. There are 22 volunteers who put in over 450 volunteer hours repairing and enhancing our trails. Highlights include: two new viewing platforms, repairs to Marsh Boardwalk damaged by flooding in 2017, repairs to Owen Point and Newcastle Trails, building picnic tables, and new footbridges for Owen Point Trail.

In addition, our crew of Trail Monitors walk all trails and boardwalks on a bi-weekly basis. They report downed trees and damage to Park management and prune minor brush on the trails. They offer friendly interactions with Park visitors.

Our major 30th Anniversary Project was the installation of the Accessible Beach Walkway. This was a joint funding initiative from the Friends, the Municipality of Brighton, Ontario Parks and the John & Bernice Parrott Foundation. Once flooding recedes, the mat will extend all the way from the Beach 1 Parking lot to the water’s edge. The materials used won’t harm the dunes and can be easily picked up for winter storage. This is a wonderful example of partnerships in action.

Management and Governance – Our electronic Newsroom is showing strong readership.

Through our website, we strive to keep members abreast of what is happening in the Park. We are also now able to use our website for membership sign-up and renewals, donations, School Programs and Christmas @ Presqu'île vendor sign ups. Last year, we had 75,000 visits to our website. By making use of available technology, we are saving both time and money.

Another important management role for the Board of Directors is Oversight. The Friends have an annual plan and budget. Progress on projects is reported to the Board at each meeting. Monthly financial position reports are also shared at each meeting. All financial transactions are monitored by another director. We continue to monitor our banking practices, investment portfolio and strategies, cash receipts, payments and financial monitoring practices.

Our Volunteers – The Friends are very fortunate to have a cadre of over 300 volunteers who devote almost 10,000 hours to the Park every year. This includes our fundraising events, working the trails, building things and helping at the craft show and other special events. More help is always needed – we want to form an Education Committee and one for Environmental Initiatives. We need a new Gift Shop coordinator as The Bouchers wish to retire. There is always a need for general assistance at a special event or the Gift Shop or barbecues. It is easy to sign up online.

Financial Statements 2018

The Chair presented the highlights of the 2018 accountant-reviewed financial statements. Key revenue and expense items were highlighted along with the overall financial position. The Chair noted that the deficit was planned. Our investments were down considerably at year end; but have since rebounded. The Friends are in a healthy financial position.

The financial statements were accepted following a motion by Steve Sinclair, seconded by Margo Vear.

A motion was made by Doug Zinnicker, seconded by John Cockburn and carried to appoint Welch LLP as the accountants for 2019. The Board was authorized to set appropriate remuneration.

Park Update

Park Superintendent Rob Cunningham spoke about the challenges of operating the Park during this spring of high water and flooding. The beach area is reduced to about 8 – 10 feet right now; some areas such as Calf Pasture and the Marsh Boardwalk are closed. Shoreline continues to erode in the day use areas.

The Friends have helped with several projects to rebuild roads, pathways, picnic tables, etc. They will be called upon to help even more as we try to rebuild. The Nature Centre needs a major renovation or rebuilding. There is a role for the Friends here.

The Chair thanked Rob and his management team – Rachel, David and Don – for their support.

Election of Board of Directors

The Chair noted that three directors were retiring; they are Phil McRae, Tim Lawley, and Doug Zinnicker. All will continue to work with us on various projects. There are four incumbent directors – Bev Cook, David Crouch, Donal Gray, and Larry Paradis. In addition, four new candidates were introduced. They are, Linda Alkenbrack, Doreen Cable, Rachel Howard and Pam Perrault.

The election of the Board of Directors was carried out by Don Boucher and approved by the members.

Life Membership Award

Life Memberships are awarded to individuals who have given significant, sustained high-quality service to the Friends over a period of many years. They are rewarded for their dedication to the values of the Friends of Presqu'île.

This year's recipient certainly fits that description. **Janine McClintock** completed two full terms on the Friends' Board of Directors. She developed and still manages our very successful School Program. She also volunteers on the Communications Committee and Christmas @ Presqu'île and handles our social media presence on Facebook.

The other Life Member recipients in attendance were asked to stand and be recognized for their many decades' worth of volunteer contributions.

Volunteer of the Year – John Cole Award

The John Cole Award is presented annually to the Volunteer of the Year. It is named in honour of the first Board Chair of the Friends. The selection of the Volunteer of the Year is a difficult task for the Board of Directors as there are so many deserving candidates who have been a shining example of the values of our organization over a period of many years. This year's recipient certainly meets these criteria.

Linda Collins is the Chair of the Christmas @ Presqu'île Committee. She has developed a devoted team who work hard but have fun while doing it. Linda works tirelessly, year-round to make sure our most important fundraising event is a success. With over 130 vendors involved, Linda's calm, well-organized approach is much appreciated.

Adjournment – The meeting was adjourned at 12:05 on motion made by Phil McRae.