Welcome, Agenda Review and Purpose – Gretchen -00:08:42.
- No changes to agenda
- Survey debriefing was deemed unnecessary.
- General consensus that we want to “do something different” by looking at organizational structure, not just “keep floundering and hope to work our way out of it.” Caroline noted that a facilitator can help us make that decision.

Review of Board Members and other Positions – Rachel et al. Some submitted by email.

After the discussion, Gretchen summarized with this: “After a new President is found, we are okay at the Board level, but Chapters, even with large members, need more help. Maybe we don’t need to hurry up and transition to new model?” Reactions were mixed from “we are okay” to “no, we are not in great shape.”

Peter had long conversation with Colorado Native Plant Society regarding success with a looser organizational model with no president, but things get done. His contact is glad to talk to anyone interested.

- Terms ending June 2021 that the Nominating Committee (Peter, Gretchen and Kris)
  - President – Gretchen Rupp is not running for a third term, and the search goes on. Gretchen could continue on in some roll, but needs help. More involvement from a VP/ Past President might make the next President’s job less intimidating. Botanists are wallflowers. Annie- huge kudos to Gretchen for the job she has
done as president. A paid staff person would could take some of the administrative duties from the President.

- Treasurers – Shannon Kimball and Jenny Tollefson are not running for another term. Through the Survey, Peter has identified a likely Treasurer from the Clark Fork Chapter as well as an assistant. Shannon will continue to work with the new Treasurer.
- Western Director-at-Large – Kris Boyd has not yet been contacted, but it is hoped she will run for another term.

- Terms ending June 2022:
  - Vice President – Ryan Quire.
  - Secretary – Rachel Potter would like to step down in 2022 and dedicate more time to Chapter work, though could still be on the Board as Chapter rep.
  - Eastern Director-at-Large – Jenny Lyman has held a couple field trips but has not been otherwise involved since the Lambert Annual Meeting.

- No term, appointed by the Board:
  - Webmaster – Bob Person. A potential understudy and assistant were identified by Peter and the Survey. Valley of Flowers found someone to take over their Chapter page. Bob will stay on to nurture the new folks along.
  - Membership – Maria Mantas – no plans to retire. Presumed that assistant Sasha is staying on.
  - Conservation – Peter Lesica is in the process of passing on to Elizabeth Bergstrom
  - Small Grants – Betty Kuropat – has delicately indicated to her committee she would like to pass the baton, but no one has stepped up. She figures she would have to announce her retirement for someone volunteer. She may put some more pressure on other committee members.
  - Landscape Chair – vacant. The survey has lots of people interested in landscaping. Ryan us updating the Source Guide, as it is information her company can use and share. Could there be a loose committee with no structure that would start with a list of tasks and they decide how to accomplish those? If we had a staff person, they could facilitate. Annie asked if we need a landscape committee. Gretchen reminded us that 25% of surveyed said native plant landscaping is principle interest in MNPS. Lots of our membership is interested in landscaping and some willing to be on a statewide committee. A review of gardens with grants is still pending. Peter asked Madeline Mazurski to write a position description but has not heard back. Maybe Ryan, while updating the Source Guide, will ID those more involved. Did NOT move forward with recruiting a chair. Betty noted that it could be a looser organization. Maybe if
we made a list of identified tasks and got a group of people together, they could accomplish some things.

- Newsletter editor/layout – Caroline Kurtz and Eileen will be done after the Spring 2021 issue. Caroline is very fond of the MNPS and is willing to continue to be involved, but needs to have someone else take over the Kelsey. Eileen will also be available to help in the short term.
  - Peter suggests someone who is a member and as is engaged in the organization such as Jennifer Hintz who has a new degree in graphic design. Peter will talk to Jennifer Hintz.
  - Currently pay $650/issue for layout and editing. Approved another $1000 at the November meeting, bringing that up to $900/issue. That was reaffirmed today.
  - May not find designer/editor in one person. They are different skill sets.
  - Caroline was not asked to reach out to potential editors, but did discuss with one editor/writer at MNHC that is intrigued with the potential of the Kelsey. As a bigger outreach tool or as is. There is another person that may be available.
  - Peter proposed an editorial board with one member from each chapter. Caroline thinks while it will help to have more people from Chapters submitting content we need one person doing the copyediting for consistency, voice. One person needs to make it into a package.
  - Caroline suggests that eventually, the editor might also take on a bigger role with outreach, education, etc.
  - Caroline will write up a job description.
  - An adhoc subcommittee was formed with Gretchen, Caroline, Annie. Rachel will ask Pat Jacquith, for an outside voice.

- Chapters:
  In general, there are volunteers but it’s hard to find those willing to step up to leadership.
  - Clark Fork
    Always lots of volunteers but few offering to take leadership rolls. Annie would like someone take over as President. Survey has helped with specific chores.

    - Calypso
      Karen and Catherine Cane are “a good mix” and willing to keep going. Three or 4 long-time members that are committed and will do support work but not leadership. Their loose structure works.

    - Kelsey
      Information from the MNPS survey came to the Kelsey Chapter in the middle of an undertaking by Bob Person and Andrea Pipp to design and promote a structure through which the Chapter might revitalize itself. To that end, we have drafted a set of bylaws for Chapter consideration. With the receipt of the survey-generated list of our members who said they would volunteer, we decided to
use our contact with them to invite them to a Chapter Zoom meeting to visit about all of these things. We set this up and Andrea conducted an hour-long session on Monday, Oct 26. As a result, we have several members who have stepped up to take on various jobs for the Chapter including Andrea Pipp as possible President. All that is pending future work, but we anticipate being back as a functioning organization rather than simple a collection of very nice and interesting people interested in native plants. Things should be settled in nicely by the MNPS Board spring meeting next year. We'll keep you informed. Their experience was that “free form” structure is not conducive for new volunteers.

- Flathead Chapter
  Meanwhile, this Chapter feels they need to switch to a more free form. Maybe those chapters that have loose structures can help each other. Rachel will be tapping a few people who indicating newsletter editing on the survey for Flathead Chapter communications. Rachel thinks more conversation on how to best nurture these volunteers would be worthwhile to her.

- Valley of Flowers
  14 or 15 people are quite involved, however, mostly are fairly new. No institutional knowledge. They have a person already taking over Valley of Flower webmaster. Newsletter editor. Disappointed that more long term members didn’t answer survey.

**Research into Potential Planning Helpers** – Caroline and others 01:23:09

An outsider who is skilled at guiding conversations and capturing what is agreed on can be very worthwhile. They can keep the conversation on high level and not get caught in the weeds and be skilled at organizational assessment or program assessment. They could keep us on track and be sure we get to where we want to be. Caroline has three possibilities, only talked to Keagan. Caroline will summarize what she found and circulate:

1. **Keagan Flaherty**- Very direct and smart and good listener. Two 3 hour sessions in facilitated discussion within a couple weeks of each other. Generate a report and recommendations for next steps. For ~$1500. Would be happy to provide one page proposal. Keagan quickly recognized that we are at a big question moment in organization’s history. Need to clarify thinking about paid staff, how do we develop leadership. What directions do we want to grow in as it relates to our mission and values?

2. **Lynn Tennefoss**- Formerly VP for programs Montana Audubon. Works with Missoula Community foundation. She does Organizational Assessments for nonprofits and more in our sector than Keagan. Caroline has not yet talked to her.

3. Another person was recommended and has more focus on financial planning, increasing revenue stream. Not talked to her. That may not be the direction we need to go now, but could be helpful in future.
Discussion: Agreement that we are looking for “organizational assessment”, rather than “strategic planning”. We have a pretty good idea of who we are. Bob has found that facilitators can be super helpful but discussions go off the rails when the facilitator has set end point in their mind rather than listening. Selection process and defining the scope of work becomes extremely important. Gretchen thinks we are at a more nuts and bolts level, how do we go about getting things done? The Board was markedly divided in the need to engage someone in this capacity at this time. A decision was to wait while those recruiting for President, editor and treasurer to continue their work and wait and make a decision later about a facilitated discussion, which could occur in the end of January.

Useful Services Montana NonProfit Association (MNA) – Bob 01:45:31

Most members have paid staff. Lots of help is aimed at human resource management. Andrea bought books on Organizational Assessment tools Bob has been going through. What is relevant to small organization as ours? MNA has affinity groups and may be starting one for all volunteer organizations. They have trainings we may want to avail ourselves of. Lots of training for best practices, etc. Our best use of them may be asking specific questions of MNA in personal conversations. Bob will ask MNA how best to connect with other similar organizations.

Fee Structure – Maria and Beth 01:59:22

See MNPS 2021 Fee Structure Proposal 10-29-2020.pdf for a compilation of fee structures of other Societies and revenue comparisons between current and different proposed fee structures. Maria noted that this is just a place to start the discussion. Gretchen commended them for a really great job.

- We do need to augment our revenue going forward, even if we don’t hire staff. We continue to budget well into the red, despite unbudgeted windfalls from meetings, last year’s raffle and lots of new lifetime members.
- Lifetime memberships are not covering expenses over time. Maria has written a solicitation letter to request Lifetime members over 10 years make a special donation. She will mail it November 15.
- Chapter reps generally have as much or more money than they need and think its okay to have a little less.
- Paper Kelseyas cost us ~$14/year for members who get the paper copy. Meaning the ~300 members who get a paper Kelsey are paying very little for other services. In one projection, we used $10/year extra for a paper Kelsey. Lifetime member Kelseyas would be grandfathered.
- If we use proposed structure with additional fee for Kelsey, net increase to State could be between $8000 and $10,000.
- Early in the discussion, doing away with individual/family categories in favor of levels of giving seemed favored, but further discussion revealed advantages of keeping numbers
of individual numbers (e.g. when writing policy letters). Could count names, not keep track of individuals. Conclusion: could have box with # members in household.

- All options should have additional donation options.
- We have few (15) living lightly members. We could leave the category at $15, especially if they are asked to pay more for a paper Kelsey.
- Recognized that at $800 for a lifetime membership, we will likely get few takers. Or should we do away with that category? Existing will be grandfathered. Or offer higher rate and expect few takers. $750? If no lifetime membership, maybe those committed will donate lots every year, which will add up to more in the long run.
- How high can the lowest level be? Lots of discussion, but $30 seemed to be agreed on.
- Current online membership renewal form has been very effective in generating extra donations.
- Maria has 150 membership brochures left so they should last until we change the fee structure.
- Lots of discussion on when we make change, but settled on: We will change distribution (yet to be determined) in October 2021 and change dues in 2022.
- Maria and Beth will provide more projections for March BOD meeting. Revenue projections will be difficult since we are making so many changes.

**In Closing:**

Gretchen will send a poll to a shorter Zoom planning meeting to be held in January.

Do we want an end of year donation appeal in Winter Kelsey? Maria will draft something based on the Lifetime Member appeal and send it to Gretchen for inclusion in the Kelsey, in her President’s column or elsewhere.

**APPENDIX A**

**MNPS Problem Statement and Actions to Date**

**November 2020 – by Gretchen Rupp**

The Board of Directors of MNPS has identified severe challenges to operating the way the organization has, to date. Specifically:

- there is a shortage of members willing to commit to serve as volunteers, either elected or otherwise, on the Board
- most chapters experience a serious shortage of volunteers to organize programs, lead field trips, and take the lead in other activities
- our programming must accommodate a wide diversity of interests, ranging from native-plant landscaping to professional botanist networking to conservation of native plant communities
- the majority of members are senior citizens

[Logo] BOD Minutes Nov Spec 20201120 6
- MNPS is funded by modest member dues and revenues from the annual meeting, plus some contributions. For the past several years, the annual budget of MNPS, set at the fall Board meeting, has projected thousands of dollars of deficit for the coming year. This has not come about, because of fortuitous events (popular and lucrative annual meetings, a one-time bump in lifetime memberships) but it is not sustainable, and it would not allow MNPS to engage paid staff.

Recognizing these problems, the MNPS Board canvassed vigorously for new volunteers, took steps to boost revenues, explored potential new organizational models, and searched for entities to help with a transition to a new model, should that be needed. Specifically, the Board:

- distributed an online survey to members and friends, querying them about their interests in native plants, their views of the various activities of the organization, and their willingness to volunteer for chapter- and state-level work

- based on survey results, contacted potential volunteers to further explore how they might become more active in MNPS, and linked them with current volunteers to begin taking on responsibilities

- surveyed the fee structures of peer native plant societies and began crafting a revised fee structure to bolster the organization’s finances

- set up a special appeal for donations to those who became lifetime members at least 10 years ago, and put specific procedures in place to acknowledge and thank donors

- assessed the resources to be gleaned from the Montana Nonprofit Association, and joined MNA

- identified possible organization-building experts to help with planning

- reached out to other native plant societies regarding successful organizational models

- entered into a Zoom contract to facilitate Board, chapter and committee meetings

- planned an issue of the Kelseya focusing on volunteering for MNPS, to come out in winter 2020-2021.
November 5, 2020

TO: MNPS Board
FROM: Bob Person
RE: My summary of organizational questions

This is the piece I was thinking about as we discussed whether we needed outside facilitation and, if so, with what questions. Someone referred to this time as a "Big Question Moment."

I accept but don't repeat the consensus we expressed regarding our clarity as to our mission and the support for that of our membership. I anticipate this meshing with Gretchen's expanded discussion.

Here are the elements of discussion as I see them:

1. Organizational structure – How to organize ourselves has been a core question we come back to. It relates primarily to whether to continue as we are as an all volunteer group of leaders with a formal structure with designated officers or go some other way. A fairly comprehensive view of options should be outlined and explored. It seems at a minimum, we would need to look at a range of options that would include, without limitation:
   1. Status quo
   2. Status quo but with a hired staff person with to be determined responsibilities
      1. A hired director could be sort of an executive secretary and keep up records and communications as defined
      2. A hired director could be something on the order of a Chief Operating Officer and really take leadership responsibility for the operation of the organization.
      3. The director might be an ex officio member of the board, be eligible to be the president of the board as a separate function or otherwise relate to the board. (This, I think, is the way the Saskatchewan Society does it, but it is also a consulting business in addition to other things.)
   3. Set up some sort of committee (Board) to run things as a group with no designated convener, presiding person, or other defined roles. This could work also (likely better) with a hired staff option.
   4. Other???

2. Organizational Communications – We have done most of our organizational communications through the Kelsey, the web site, and a FaceBook account. Other social media are exploding around us. Radio and television have not been any part of what we do; newspapers very little. Would we benefit from a unified communications strategy? Options:
   1. Status quo with Newsletter editor, webmaster, some people posting to FB.
   2. Combined function of some sort.
   3. Other?

3. Discussion of leadership – is there anything in the way of training, communication, or other techniques that could help us build in more of a sense of leadership for us. For many organizations, programs expressly designed to build leadership capacity recognize this crucial role whether it operates formally or informally.
4. Budget implications – What are budget implementations and revenue options with respect to any of these matters.