

September - October 2024 Naturalist Report

Brad Garrity – Naturalist

Admin/Finance

- CD Maturity Report

Bank	Balance as of 12/31/22	Maturity Date
BOK	\$ 11,786.94	October 7, 2024
East WI	\$ 28,763.46	October 16, 2024
East WI	\$ 33,219.04	January 6, 2025
East WI	\$ 65,411.79	January 19, 2025

- Golden Investment Account – Statement ending 9/30/24 (see attached). We need to determine how to allocate these funds. Staff will present proposals for consideration in November.
- Cassie and Brad met with Will and Ashley to discuss how the operating budget works.
  - We discussed moving contracted services to the contractual services budget line for 2025.
  - We discussed the Sub-Categories and allocation of the 201-restricted account, as well as how to allocate donations. We will pick up where Nathaniel left off to establish “buckets” for restricted funds/donations (ex. Programming, Conservancy Zone, etc.)
  - With donations, we will direct people towards donating to the Endowment fund first, but the aforementioned “buckets” would be for directed donations, but also give us enough wiggle room to use the funds as we see fit within the bucket category. We are looking to move away from individual items for memorials except when offered (such as with the benches needed for the boardwalk.)
  - Will is going to attend the November meeting as our guest to discuss items of interest such as the capital budget vs. operational budget, the city process for capital project funding, budget to actual, and more! We will solicit questions ahead of time to best use this time with Will.

- Tree Sale – We received a check for \$1,273.37 from Kaukauna Utilities, which will be used as the downpayment for purchasing 2025 tree seedlings from Chief River Nursery for the 2025 Tree Sale.
- CIP – As noted by Director Vosters via email on 9/27/24, the nature center building entrance project has been moved up to 2026 following the Committee's concerns and recommendation. With this update, the our current approved CIP projects are as follows:

2025-Replacement of Truck 19  
 2026-Nature Center Entrance Way Accessibility  
 2027-Window replacement for Nature Center  
 2028-Nature Center Playscape  
 2029-Display Upgrade

## Education

- September/October have been busy with school field trips. Things look to slow down going into November, however requests continue to come in. With new education staff, some programs have looked a bit different than in years past, but feedback from teachers has been positive that we are providing robust, quality programming that supports and supplements what is being taught in the classroom, and they appreciate the new spin on some old programs.
- Focus on the Fox was held September 21<sup>st</sup>. We had great weather. Attendance was sparse, but on par with or slightly above previous years (approximately 200 visitors). We had many wonderful volunteers from Friends of 1000 Islands, the community, Kaukauna High School, Amcor, and more, as well as all of the great organizations who had booths at the event. The Spooktacular Softball tournament was held the same day and parking was an issue. It was also a very busy day of activities in Kaukauna and the Fox Valley. (This is GOOD NEWS for our community!!! But it did surely affect our attendance.) Staff has received volumes of feedback and will continue to discuss ideas for improvements.
- Education Committee met on October 3<sup>rd</sup>.
  - We discussed current programming and a high level overview of plans of the Naturalist and Asst. Naturalist to continue former Naturalist Blood's work organizing and standardizing current lesson plans. Once this work is completed and Brad and Kat have been through a field trip season and are more experienced leading the plans, then we can look at updates, changes

and consolidation. Brad will be conducting some outreach to area educators for conversation on our programming and how we can continue to effectively supplement what is being taught in the classroom and provide the most meaningful field experience that we can. (Possibility of reinstating the Maple Syrup program for all elementary schools or instituting other programs to serve all students of certain grades. Also considering how to bring more middle school and high school involvement and potentially cross-grade interaction, with an example being the vegetation assessment with the goat program.)

- Committee discussed Spring public programming planning beginning in November/December.
  
- We also talked about beginning planning for interpretive signage in the Conservancy Zone post-boardwalk replacement, perhaps beginning late 2025. Wayfinding and location signage is the priority, but we should start selecting standards for all signage.
  
- Discussed prioritization of needed and desired inside display updates/replacement starting in 2025.
  
- Discussed evaluations for school and public programs, talked about a few ideas to drive higher participation in surveys and what the data should be used for.
  
- Possible future community Eco-Challenges/programming to help both educate and involve the community to raise awareness about important issues (ex. Leaving car idling while waiting for school pickup, etc.)

## Building and Grounds

- Brad and Eric met with John Neumeier and Taylor Conger along with representatives from Radtke Construction for a pre-construction meeting for the boardwalk. Radtke is finishing a pier at Fox Valley Tech and then will be starting our project. Target date is October 21<sup>st</sup>, but could wait until October 28<sup>th</sup> beginning with Phase 1 which is the riverside section of the boardwalk. This is slated to be completed by January 15<sup>th</sup> with a brief pause for Eagle Days, and then they will begin Phase 2 which is the inland sections. They will be staging equipment in the parking lot by Diamond 3.

They will cut and save sections that we might want for elsewhere on the trail, but will tear out and remove the remainder.

- Siding Project: We were finally able to get our siding quotes. We have connected with Jake Van Gompel and John Neumeier regarding setting up a timeline for purchasing the materials and getting the project started. Eric and I plan to go with Drexel for the materials based not only on cost but also their level of service and responsiveness. It will be a heavy duty vinyl, vertically hung siding similar to the current color of the Center. We are well below the amount budgeted for CIP (pending any cost overruns) and are looking at also replacing the soffit as well.
- Bathroom Sinks: We have received quotes for replacing the bathroom sinks and counters with two tiered sinks. We are continuing to shore up the design that works best for our needs and stays within the limited budget we have. A decision will be made in the next few weeks to get the project started.
- Buckthorn/Invasive Management: Eric, as well as our numerous community service workers and volunteers have worked on removing more buckthorn and invasive plants from the conservancy zone. There had been expansion of the Japanese Knotweed in the upper woods which require careful extraction. We have begun work on removing those plants nearest the trails due to the danger from the thorns. The phragmites removal project was put on hiatus this year, but we will go out in winter and cut off seed heads and mow down the stalks and then decide on resuming the cut and treat methods next summer. The Goats were on site from Sept 23 – Oct 7<sup>th</sup> and did an excellent job of defoliating the buckthorn and other plants. We will follow up in late fall through winter with mowing down the shoots, and continue that in early Spring prior to the emergence of the ephemeral plants.
- Randee Mooney project: Randee Mooney has nearly completed her Eagle Scout project to revitalize the Mooney Butterfly Garden. She and her crew of scouts and family worked to remove some hazardous plants, re-establish a walking path within the garden, and clean out other debris. To complete the Eagle portion she will be building and setting two Leopold style benches as well as installing updated butterfly houses. Next Spring she will be completing her Gold Star project for Girl Scouts which will include interpretive signage and education surrounding the Monarchs and other pollinators.