

Minutes
Saint John's Arboretum Advisory Council
Monday, June 15, 1:00—5:00 p.m.
Natural History Museum, New Science 150, SJU

Present: Tom Kroll, Sarah Gainey, Jenny Kutter, Chuck Wocken, Jim Tingerthal, Steve Saupe, John Taylor, Greg Miller, Janette Monear, Tom Haeg, Glenn Miller, Terri Barreiro, Bob Russell, Alison Binsfeld, Megan Van Loh, Bobby Mandell, Andy Elton, Rosalie Leiner

Fiscal Year 2009 (July 1, 2008-June 30, 2009) Evaluation Discussion

Fundraising

Highlights:

- ELM Grant (\$8000), Wal-Mart Community Grant (\$2000), Initiative Foundation (\$1000), Single Donor (\$7,000, \$135,000)
- Beginning of "Buy a seat on the bus" campaign to raise funds for transportation reimbursement to schools
 - Foundations consistently do not cover transportation costs
 - Transportation cost is #1 obstacle for schools scheduling field trips

Challenges:

- Long-term funding for fellowship
- Long-term funding for bussing
- Identifying new foundations to ask

Discussion:

- Do we have/need a dedicated position for fundraising? Full-time, non-rotating office coordinator designed to help alleviate that need
- How much time spent fundraising? Perhaps 10-15% from Jenny Kutter, similarly from Tom Kroll
- A handful of grants unachieved during the last year and a half
- Need a clearer budget description to assist in fundraising. How much do we need? What for? We need more specific numbers
- Good practice: say thank-you 7 times for gifts/donations
- Additional money will come into the Arboretum from the LCCMR grant reimbursements in FY09-FY10

Community Education

Highlights:

- New programming: Natural History Lecture Series
- Expansion of programming: Library programs, scout patch for maple syruping, AHL conference in January—addition of kid's sessions
- Volunteers: MN Master Naturalist training, maple syruping

Challenges:

- More requests than staff are available for
- Carrying capacity/variable numbers at programming

- Outdoor facility
- Volunteer management

Learned?

- Families sell
- Keep it simple
- Use existing connections for established programs to expand

Discussion:

- Need more advertising for programs like lecture series
- Advertise which programs are more kid-friendly
- Look into charging for programs (members free?)—sometimes putting a price on it gives people the idea it could be worth more
- Library programs expanding geographically too far? Consider charging more for libraries outside St. Cloud GRRRL system
- Volunteers: about half of MN Master Naturalist volunteers are regularly active with the Arboretum. Need to have better volunteer management/coordination to attract, train, and manage volunteers
- Community education for seniors? Look into programming options for senior population.

Administration

Highlights:

- Full-time, non-rotating office coordinator position, shared with Env. Studies department
- Replacing office coordinator fellow with a 2nd EE fellow
- SJU Summer Initiative—20 students working for the Arboretum this summer

Challenges:

- Additional staff to meet demand
- Space issues in science buildings
- Volunteer coordination—make volunteerism more effective and organized

Discussion:

- 2009 summer initiative hired more than 80 students in 30 departments on campus—20 in Arboretum. Funding included money for additional part-time supervisors and materials/supplies for various projects in the Arboretum. We're already seeing great success in the amount of work being accomplished by the crews and hope to find a way to continue the program in the future.
- Science buildings are full and as academic departments grow, Arboretum has to fight to keep office space in the science buildings. Need for space, long-term goal of an identifiable "center" on campus is in the Master Plan—maps and plans are drawn up for addition to New Science (not approved) for long term-planning
- If our goal of getting additional staff succeeds, it may push us out of our current space.

PR & Membership

Highlights:

- Newsletter changes
- Trend in membership giving is steady & increasing
- Online giving option ALMOST up and running

Challenges:

- # members leveling off
- How to increase student membership—before and after graduation?

- How to update/improve member benefits or message about benefits?

Discussion:

- Consistent membership is a good sign, many nonprofits are currently seeing significant drops in membership
- We see approx 100 new members every year but don't see big increases in total membership. Who are we losing each year and why??
- Need to do more student outreach to get more students involved
- Should tap into regional Alumni associations—speak at their events, educate about the Arb and what we do

CSB/SJU Education

Highlights:

- Increased connections to academic classes
 - Hands on the Land classes
 - Environmental Ed. pedagogy class
- Collaboration with campus organizations on events
 - Earth Week, Trail Rangers
- PR/Marketing
 - Nature Notes email
 - “It’s your backyard, so get out and play” campaign

Challenges:

- Increase numbers of professors who use the Arboretum and tracking professors who already do
- Targeting first-year students—getting them involved early
- Keeping things new/fresh/hip—we get older but the students stay the same age
- Environmental education vs. recreation

Discussion:

- Orientation potential
 - Check with Jon McGee’s survey—is the land and important factor in students choices to attend CSB/SJU?
- It’s good to provide activities that get kids outside (i.e. bonfire on sledding hill) but should those events be more often co-sponsored and managed by outdoor recreation organizations on campus to help us remember our focus on EE

Lands

Highlights:

- Completion of sugar shack addition
- New bridge on chapel trail
- High Gemini Prairie
- New tractor

Challenges:

- Buckthorn—always
- Sustaining crews/maintaining equipment

Discussion:

- Tom is spending more time on energy related issues—wind energy, solar photovoltaic, cold water air conditioning—and the land/infrastructure issues that arise

- Double check fish/wildlife issues of large wind turbines—they can change migration patterns, cause significant population declines of various birds/bats, etc. Need to really study impact of a large turbine at Saint John's.
- Do we need a new branch/committee of the Arboretum to focus on energy?
- Need to capitalize on the educational uses of energy
 - Energy curriculum development is part of the ELM grant received
 - Energy educators workshop scheduled this summer to help teachers bring energy issues into the classroom
- Summer students are making even more progress on projects than we had hoped this summer. Photo documentation of their projects will be added to the web site all summer
 - The chapel bridge is complete
 - LOTS of buckthorn has already been cut/pulled on Watab
 - Will start working on erosion control along chapel trail
 - Students may be able to help complete the chapel trailhead once the design is approved

preK-12 Education

Highlights:

- Confirmation of continued partnership with St. Cloud school district 742
- New programming: increase number of middle school students with ELM grant, about 20 new schools came to the Arboretum this year, without our doing outreach
- Positive feedback continues: teacher evaluations of both programming and staff are excellent, regular thanks for transportation reimbursement that makes field trips possible

Challenges:

- Bathroom facility is a high priority—council or committees need to take action before this fall
- How to increase high school numbers
- Staff turnover—constantly training staff
- Funding for transportation
- Development of criteria—help drive to quality rather than focus on quantity

Discussion:

- Despite economy, schools still want to come
- Contract with ISD 742 and overwhelming success—we have become an important part of their curriculum and they're working to keep budget cuts out of the classroom. They'll continue to pay up front for 4000 students to visit each year, and we can bill them at the end of the year if more classrooms come
- Bathrooms:
 - As we drive to improve quality of field experiences, we plan to increase the class length from 2 to 2.5 hours (working toward 3 hours).
 - Quality facility—an unobtrusive composting toilet vs. blue porta-potty
 - Likely need two facilities around boardwalk loop—where are the best locations?
 - Petters Pavilion near the chapel trail is open to visitors—large family bathroom as well as men's/women's facilities—F. Greg can give us a tour if we want
- Working with high schools may be giving teachers the Arboretum as a resource they can use for their own classroom programming without necessarily relying on Arboretum staff for programming.

Based on evaluations from each of the committees, what are the big projects to tackle in FY10?

- Staffing
 - Volunteer coordination
 - Maintaining summer crew in the future
- Comprehensive Plan
 - Create 1-page document for each committee
 - Specific statistics/goals with numbers
 - Step-by-step layout of what needs to be done to meet mission/goals
 - What do we need and when?
 - Will help go after bigger grants
- Fundraising
 - Staffing
 - Capacity
 - Space/facilities

Conclusion/Goals for October meeting:

- Each committee create goals for up to 3 years out: prioritize activities, give recommendations, have specific numbers, have action plans ready
- Janette will create a volunteer coordinator job description
- Space/Integration issue needs to be highlighted—talk to Gordy Bailey as chair of Identity Committee