



HIGHLANDS
BIOLOGICAL FOUNDATION

2024 Fall Board of Trustees Meeting

October 23, 2024

In attendance at Office: Karen Patterson, Cathy Sloss Jones, Lindy Harrison, Frances Oakley, Jonnie Swann, Jennie Stowers, David Martin, John Mitchener, Gayle Watkins, Leslie Manning, Lori Heys, Martha Stibbs, Lisa Armstrong, Tom Holmes, Linda Barlow, Jamie Creola, Melanie Mauldin, and Jennifer Love

In attendance via Zoom: Vernon Skiles, Ruthie Edwards

Meeting called to order at 3:05 p.m. by President John Mitchener.

A motion was made by John to approve previous meeting's minutes. Seconded by David Martin and Karen Patterson. Motion carried.

President's Report, John Mitchener

Mitchener welcomed new and returning Board members: Karen Patterson, Ruthie Edwards, Charley Tarver, Gayle Watkins, Keller Torrey, Lori Heys, Robert (Bob) Strickland, Bill Bush, Leslie Manning. He thanked Tom Holmes for stepping into the role of VP after Bill Clarkson's departure back in June.

Mitchener thanked all the 2024 Committee Chairs: Finance - Tom, Development - Keller, Buildings and Grounds - Charley w/Linda Barlow sub-committee chair for new office, Strategic Planning - Gayle, Education & Outreach and Nominating - Jennie

Treasurer's Report, Tom Holmes

Holmes noted that HBF is in good shape and doing well financially and that we had two very successful fundraisers - Soiree \$175K raised - NET \$123K and Half Shell ~\$35K raised with minimal expenditures due to Helene and the event's cancellation. And while individual contributions appear lower than last year at this time, HBF had several large, one-time gifts at the beginning of 2023 for the new office and we are basically on-track.

Holmes mentioned that the 2023 Audit was completed with no issues. The process was extremely long, arduous this time due to the changing of Quickbooks accounting systems and fiscal years and thanked Jamie and Winter for all their time and effort.

2025 Budget planning has started, and review meetings have been scheduled throughout November and into December. The 2025 Budget will be presented to the Board at the Winter Board of Trustees meeting on December 11th.

Development Report, Jamie Creola (for Keller Torrey)

Creola reiterated the good news regarding the Soiree and Half-Shell. She mentioned that the committee has met a few weeks prior and were working on 2025 Fundraisers (Soiree, Half Shell) and cultivation events (DAM dinners). Lori Heys has agreed to Co-Chair the 2025 Soiree and Jamie/Keller/Lori will be meeting next week to begin planning (w/help from Jennie). Lindy and Ruthie have agreed to head up the DAM dinners.

Creola mentioned that this summer and fall HBF was awarded 2 programming grants for outreach and summer programs. The Church of the Good Shepherd (\$1,200) and Cullasaja Women's Outreach (\$7,500). While the COG grant wasn't for the full amount (\$5K), they are very interested in HBF and awarding fully in the future as well as helping the organization attract Board members from the Cashier's community.

Buildings & Grounds Report, Jamie Creola (for Charley Tarver) and Linda Barlow

Creola began by thanking Linda Barlow for all the time and effort she has put into the new office. She has been instrumental in directly managing the work and contractors putting in 1 to 2 weeks of time.

Creola explained that the Executive Committee met to discuss all the challenges and opportunities we now have with 6 properties (3 w/buildings, 3 land only). It was decided that with all the work that needs to be done with structures and grounds, it was time to eliminate the previous "Real Estate" and "Gardens" committees and have one "Buildings and Grounds" committee.

The B&G committee will focus on assessing each property and deciding what needs to be taken care of immediately, what we need to map/plan out - aligning with our upcoming strategic planning, and how we plan on managing each.

Charlie Tarver has graciously agreed to chair the entire committee, but will have sub-committees (with co-chairs) to get the work done - e.g., new office on Cashiers Rd. Linda (Co-Chair), Lisa Armstrong (Co-Chair) land property review.

Linda talked a little more about the new office and all the work that has been/will be done - getting rid of dangerous and non-native trees/plants, work on the water and septic systems, and upcoming planning work for parking area, irrigation, and subsequent landscape design.

This will include looking at the adjoining property that Amy Patterson is looking to purchase and gift to HBF.

Strategic Planning Report, Jamie Creola and Gayle Watkins

Creola let the Board know that HBF is getting geared up for strategic planning. Gayle Watkins has agreed to chair the committee. The goal is to present a draft Strategic Plan at our annual Membership and Summer Board meeting in June. While the committee's role will be to implement and steward the process, participation by the entire Board, community partners, and constituents will be critical to its success. Stay tuned for further information.

Watkins mentioned that the committee's first meeting will be on November 1st to discuss process and participation and that more will follow.

Education/Director's Report, Jamie Creola

Creola began by thanking Julie Thomson for all her hard work and just jumping in late this spring. She noted that we had a busy, successful summer and welcomed 4 Naturalists and 1 part-time Educator to assist with programming at the Nature Center this summer (camps, daily programs, Zahner Lectures, and Nature Center Nights).

Creola noted HBF fall programming was in full swing and let Julie talk about the different programs at the Nature Center and out in the community. Creola also showed all the funding that HBF has provided to HBS including GIAs, Research Assistants, MAPS bird banding, BatPack, Wayfinding Signage, and a special bat event held in September.

Lastly, Creola thanked the Board for all their support, noting that she and Julie couldn't do it without their help.

Macon County STEM, Jennifer Love

Love reported on the various activities that HBF has supported through their grant this year - Migration Celebration, Biodiversity Day, Professional Development for Teachers, Outdoor Classroom, Special presentations and classes.

Love thanked HBF for support in these projects.

Meeting adjourned: 4:45 PM