



THE FRIENDS OF THE BRUCE DISTRICT PARKS ASSOCIATION

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Friends held its 39th AGM on November 4, at the Parks Visitor Centre in Tobermory, with 15 members attending in person, and 5 joining virtually. All motions were passed unanimously, including motions to amend the Friend's Articles and Bylaws in order to comply with the new Ontario Not for Profit Act, which comes into effect in 2024. Other business included a review of the healthy financial position, and updates on the Host program and Lightstation activities over the past year. Thanks to all who attended and participated.

After the AGM, the Board convened and confirmed its officers as follows: Richard Ottewell-Chair; Rob Tomchick-Vice Chair; Jeff Buckingham-Secretary; Bret Shepley-Treasurer.

The Board has commenced the process of updating the Friends' website, including a streamlining of the membership application process, as well as providing for online applications for the Host program. It is hoped the changes will be in effect early in 2024.

For those not able to attend the AGM, the Chair's Comments to the AGM are set out below.

THE FRIENDS OF THE BRUCE DISTRICT PARKS

ANNUAL MEETING 2023

CHAIR'S COMMENTS

2023 was a year of challenges, triumphs, changes, successes and a great deal of learning for many of us. Our year started with the sudden passing of our long time Chair, Peter Miller. Peter had been instrumental in spearheading the numerous significant projects at the Lightstation, and in recruiting “new blood” to the Board. In fact, at least in my case, he may have taken a certain pervers pleasure in my wanting to do volunteer maintenance work at the Lightstation, and him telling me that was fine, but to do so, I would need to be on the Board. Not so, in fact. But here I am. Peter had an institutional knowledge of Friends, and a love of the Island, both of which were obvious, and both of which are missed. “Pete’s Bench”, paid for by the generous donations from 3 Members, is a fitting tribute, and if you get a chance, take a sit and enjoy the view out over Georgian Bay from the lawns of the Lightstation.

I would like to acknowledge the hard work of the Board, the volunteers, the hosts, and the support of the donors and Members. As the saying goes, it takes a Village. Just dealing with the store inventory alone took a tremendous effort on the part of many. The store sold roughly 3400 cans of pop, 4800 bags of chips, 1400 chocolate bars, and 2100 bottles of water. In addition, volunteers struggled with 25 large water jugs, 24 propane tanks, and all of the miscellaneous items required to meet the needs of the approximately 30,000 visitors to the Lightstation, and the 31 Host groups. Every item to the Lightstation had to be manually handled, sometimes numerous times, one of the challenges of operating a business on an island. We can’t thank Rick, Ashley, and Griff Salens, and the crews of Blue Heron Cruises, enough, for their continuous and cheerful support. Without boat transportation, the activities of Friends would be severely curtailed.

I would also like to personally thank volunteer Bruce Praill, for his endless energy and enthusiasm for all things Lightstation. In 2022, Bruce made 32 day trips, and in 2023, he made 36 day trips to the Island. He looked after the gardens, maintenance, carried inventory, fixed broken stuff, made awesome suggestions for improvement, and was generally just the best kind of volunteer we could ever hope for. We have agreed to double his salary next year, and he assures us he will be available, as always.

Our relations with Parks continues to be excellent. Ethan Meleg, Acting Superintendent, has been available, approachable, knowledgeable, helpful, and encouraging. His staff have likewise been super to work with, assisting with those inevitable water line crises, removing recycling bags, completing some of the necessary repairs, and on occasion, assisting with the transportation of inventory.

You will see in the Directors' Report those other items of note for 2023, and the items on the Board's Agenda and wish list for 2024. We can't do everything at once, but we are committed to:

- 1. Updating our Membership and Host Application processes, Website and Social Media presence;**
- 2. Ensuring that our charity is in compliance with all of the new rules that come into effect in 2024;**
- 3. Taking a "big picture" view of what Friends should be doing over the next few years, in terms of short and long term goals, and strategies to implement those goals;**
- 4. Working with Parks Canada and SON to foster reconciliation efforts with First Nations, and improving the experience of all visitors to what are arguably the prettiest National Parks in Canada.**

Thanks to the Board, and to Parks for their efforts with this past year, and I look forward to 2024. Thanks as well to Bill and Teresa for organizing today's event, and the Ethan and Parks for supplying the venue.

Respectfully,

Richard Ottewell, Acting Chair