

## **Friends of the Lower Suwannee & Cedar Keys National Wildlife Refuges**

### **March 21, 2023, Board Meeting (via Zoom) Minutes**

**Attending:** President GiNESSA Maher, President-elect Denise Feiber, Past President Debbie Meeks, Treasurer Linda Kimball, Secretary Paul Ramey, Ed DeHaan, Bill Dummitt, Denise Feiber, Peg Hall, Joe Hand, Debbie Jordan, Ron Kamzelski, Boyd Kimball, Dan Kline, John McPherson, John Thalacker, Pete Tirrell, Jeri Treat, Barbara Woodmansee, Scott Wright.

**Representing the Refuge,** Manager Andrew Gude

President GiNESSA Maher called the meeting to order at 10:02 a.m.

GiNESSA began by explaining the reorganization of the agenda to try and streamline board meetings. The new agenda format begins with the Approval Items, followed by the Refuge Update, a Reports section, Discussion Items, Open Discussion and Action items. The Action items are not necessarily items requiring a vote, but items to make sure we take care of, if needed, before the next meeting.

#### **Approval Items**

1. The meeting agenda was approved unanimously by voice vote (Wright/ Feiber) with one change from Paul to add an update on the NEEF pollinator grant.
2. The Feb. 21, 2023, meeting minutes were approved unanimously by voice vote (McPherson/ Feiber) with several corrections.
3. Treasurer's report - Linda Kimball – As of Feb. 28, 2023, the checking account balance is \$3,495.96. The money market account balance is 47,376.67, which includes \$15,000 in the restricted fund set aside for Vista. Including \$110 in petty cash, the Friends' total checking/savings and assets is 50,982.63.  
The treasurer's report was approved unanimously by voice vote (Ramey/ Hall).

#### **Refuge Update – Manager Andrew Gude**

The Seahorse Key Open House last week had 96 attendees and went well. It was cold, but that kept the bugs at bay. The next open house is March 29. All Refuge roads are now open so Friends can remove that notice from the website. Daniel held a meeting last Thursday with the contractor who will be conducting the forest restoration with the \$1.5 million the Refuge received from an Act of Congress. The Refuge has another contract for fire breaks and roadside clearing along our grass roads to try and manage the encroaching forest for \$250,000. Andrew reported the Refuge doesn't yet have a budget for this year. He said his staff has been regularly helping St. Marks Refuge with prescribed burns. Andrew said he's considering limiting the number of turkey permits issued -- not for the next season but the following hunting season. He also mentioned the thrips release to help manage pepper trees on Scale Key east of Cedar Key, and that they are going out this week to monitor the progress. John and George are currently doing prescribed burns at St. Marks and have been for the last three weeks. The current Dixie County and Levy County volunteers will be leaving in April and there will be another couple staying on the Levy County side to volunteer this summer.

## Reports

Ginessa mentioned Peg coordinated nominating our Friends group for a national award, Ginessa reviewed the application and Andrew wrote a letter of recommendation.

Visitor Contact updates –

-Jeri reported on the 3/15 Seahorse Key Open House. It went well and she discovered brochures aren't really needed. The next open house is set for 3/29 and Jeri said Friends member Chuck Adams plans to volunteer and she would like one additional volunteer.

-Debbie Meeks reported other outreach efforts have gone well, including Shell Mound, Suwannee Arts Festival and the River Trail. (details in agenda and DrobBox)

-Denise reported about the current outreach efforts at the Cedar Key Chamber Welcome Center and discussions with Sue Colson, including Sue would like Friends to continue with the outreach as well as the music. Sue suggested Friends would be present from 10 a.m. to noon with the music beginning at noon. Denise needs to confirm with Sue if this would be for only Saturday or Saturday and Sunday and possibly a weekday.

-Annual Meeting Debriefing – Ginessa said the annual meeting went well (debriefing meeting details sent via email). Bill mentioned we didn't have enough tables initially, but he and Jay Bushnell went to the Fowlers Bluff Fire Station to get more tables.

Brochures and Panels in the works –

Debbie reported on updates (listed on agenda) and that we have received the Passport stamps. John Thalacker mentioned that any trees mentioned in the River Trail brochure should be identified with signs along the trail.

Junior Ranger Program –

Debbie said more books are needed and she had a request from a teacher in Old Town who would like to have her class complete the workbook in April, and Sue Colson requested 60 for a summer Cedar Key program. (Carol Lang was mentioned as a possible teacher for the program.) Also, two students have completed the program.

Butterflies –

Barbara said the surveys are going well and she has a lot of help. Peg requested if Barbara could please get some photographs of volunteers and Barbara conducting the surveys.

Merchandise –

Boyd said notecards are being printed, a new item. Reordered new Cedar Key hats that sold out, and also new lime green butterfly shirts with a V-neck that Barbara ordered. He's also looking at the possibility of ordering visors, water bottles and sweatshirts down the road.

Membership –

Debbie said membership continues to climb.

Online Communications –

Peg gave a brief update on online communications (report in Dropbox)

John Thalacker mentioned he can assist with storage for items for the Cedar Key Arts Festival and can help with the takedown on Sunday night. Jeri also mentioned she has a lot of brochures if they are needed.

Birds – Debbie Jordan had to leave the meeting early.

Pepper Busting Update –

Scott gave an update on a productive year and an update on the thrip flies that attack the new growth of the pepper plants.

NEEF Grant Update –

Paul gave an update on the NEEF Grant application. He spoke with Jaret Daniels at UF who said the grant is extremely competitive, and also with Barbara who said Monarchs are not her focus (or the Refuge's). A letter of intent to apply for the grant was not submitted.

### **Discussion Items**

Ginessa mentioned new board member onboarding initiatives and discussions and creating a task document to streamline our efforts.

Volunteers Needed –

Discussion of upcoming events and volunteers needed.

Vista –

John McPherson gave an update on the LOCI schematic being received and approved by the Division of Historical Resources, so we can move forward. He suggested planning a cleanup day for Saturday, May 13. John also mentioned we need an asbestos survey done, and he got a quote for \$1,550, but it has some issues that need to be resolved first, including too much liability on Friends.

Debbie Meeks will be giving a private tour to Chris Barber and family on March 22. John suggested we schedule a monthly tour of Vista on the third Wednesday and promote on the website.

John ordered the sign for Vista from the Chiefland Print Shop, which quoted a price of only \$25.

John got a quote for the insurance for \$1,980 for the year for the different policies and thinks we should move forward.

Ginessa asked if we know what other Friends groups are doing and how they are funding? Denise and Linda think the insurance discussion should be brought up and discussed at the financial committee meeting. Ginessa suggested due to time limitations for today's meeting that we not vote today and instead discuss at the upcoming finance committee.

Debbie Meeks asked about the Mark Gluckman rendering discussion and whether we should hold in person or via Zoom. Denise suggested Zoom and Debbie will come up with some possible dates.

Debbie also asked about Doug Sanders who wrote the book on the Cummers and having him possibly speak at an event, maybe a fundraiser. This will be moved offline and discussed later.

Mobile Outreach –

Denise moved "that we move forward with pursuing the purchase of a mobile welcome center." Peg seconded and it was approved unanimously by voice vote.

President Ginessa Maher adjourned the meeting at noon.

Respectfully submitted by Secretary Paul Ramey