

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

### **April 18, 2023, Board Meeting (via Zoom) Minutes**

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

**Representing the Refuge,** Manager Andrew Gude

**Not attending:** Peg Hall, Boyd Kimball, Linda Kimball, John McPherson

**Guest:** Jay Bushnell

President Ginessa Mahar called the meeting to order at 10:00 a.m.

### **Approval Items**

1. The meeting agenda was approved unanimously by voice vote (Mahar/ Meeks).
2. The March meeting minutes were not completed before the meeting. It was approved unanimously by voice vote (Feiber/ Mahar) to delay approving the minutes by email vote before the next meeting.
3. Treasurer's report – President Ginessa Mahar for Treasurer Linda Kimball – As of March 31, 2023, the checking account balance is \$1,823.93. The money market account balance is \$56,377.84, which includes \$30,000 in the restricted fund set aside for Vista. Including \$110 in petty cash, the Friends' total checking/savings and assets is \$58,311.77.  
The treasurer's report was approved unanimously by voice vote (Ramey/ Thalacker).

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

- The Refuge is having an environmental compliance inspection today.
  - The hunt brochure has been finalized and Andrew's waiting for a final version to be posted on websites.
  - Daniel's been working on the \$2 million in grants from infrastructure funding for forestry and roadside work.
  - The Refuge is spending its budget and is on track halfway through the year.
  - Andrew's been working on a grant with other agencies for low water crossings on the Levy County side.
  - Bird surveys start next week.
  - Our winter volunteers are on their way out, and we're getting another set of volunteers in early May on the Levy County side, Rex and Claudette Tilley. The Vista resident volunteers will be leaving by the first of May.
- John Thalacker asked if Andrew would be available for the insurance discussion on volunteers and everyone agreed we should discuss it now since it's on the agenda later as an Action item.

### **Action Item – Friends Insurance**

Andrew said he had been asked about the Pepper Busters volunteers insurance and what would be covered when they are working on or off the Refuge. Scott said it also had been brought up about

possibly requiring Pepper Busters to show proof of personal medical insurance before working off the Refuge. John Thalacker said he thought Andrew had previously stated that doing volunteer work for Friends on the Refuge is not the same as being a Refuge volunteer. Andrew clarified that just because a person is a Friends member does not mean they are automatically a Refuge volunteer, but they could be both if they have signed a Refuge Volunteer Agreement, which must be renewed annually each Jan. 1.

Ginessa clarified that those who sign a Refuge Volunteer Agreement are covered while working as a volunteer with Andrew's approval on Refuge property. Currently the Pepper Busters or any other volunteer would not be covered medically by the Volunteer Agreement if they are injured while working off Refuge property. This topic came up during the recent Friends finance and insurance meeting. So there is a gap in medical coverage for Pepper Busters who may be injured while working off Refuge property.

Ginessa explained that during the financial meeting three different insurance packages were discussed. The group also received a financial update from Linda on whether Friends has the funds to purchase and maintain the insurance. With the understanding Friends does have the funds, the committee made two separate recommendations and motions:

The first motion was to purchase the Commercial policy at an annual cost of \$1,006, and the Directors and Officers policy at an annual cost of \$755. This motion passed unanimously, 9-0. The second motion was to purchase a third Volunteer Accident policy at an annual cost of \$219 that addresses the gap previously discussed when volunteers like the Pepper Busters are working off Refuge property. This motion passed 8-1. Friends will likely need to develop a Friends Volunteer Form if the Volunteer Accident policy is purchased.

After Ginessa's explanation, John Thalacker made a motion that the board approve both recommendations from the subcommittee for all three policies with a combined annual cost of \$1,980. Paul seconded the motion, which passed unanimously by voice vote.

John Thalacker recommended Friends use the Refuge Volunteer Form as a guide in developing its own Volunteer Form. The insurance company is Alliant.com (Conserve-a-nation), and John McPherson researched the policies. Debbie Meeks recommended we check with other Friends groups regarding their experience with similar insurance policies.

#### **Action Item – Old Town fourth grade Junior Ranger field trip**

Debbie Meeks explained a group of Old Town fourth-graders is planning to come to the Refuge (Shell Mound) May 4 for a Junior Ranger field trip, and that another class from Cross City has also expressed interest. The Old Town group is arriving at 9 a.m. and plans to stay until 12:45 p.m. Debbie asked if Ginessa would be able to procure a graduate student to attend and assist, which she can. Andrew said he would be gone that day and John Stark would be the primary Refuge contact. The board unanimously approved by voice vote paying the graduate student \$120. (Meeks/ Kline)

#### **Discussion Items**

##### **Governance**

-Ginessa recapped this morning's meeting for new board member on-boarding, and she will send the document out via email after this meeting for everyone to review.

-Ginessa also asked about the idea for a board member social for members to get to know each other. Following the May 13 Vista cleanup is one possibility with another get together in the fall when more board members are here.

#### Advocacy

-Looking for anyone interested in co-authoring a newspaper article about law enforcement on the Refuge. Jay Bushnell said he would work with Andrew and Ginessa on an article.

#### Outreach

-The Florida Paddling Trails Association reached out to Debbie Meeks and Sue Colson about a possible partnership. Nothing is currently planned but it's possible we could partner with them for a summer solstice event. It was also suggested that they may be willing to help pay for new Refuge paddling guides.

-Saving money on printing – Debbie Meeks had an idea that if we produced black and white tear sheets instead of some of the color brochures we could save money.

-Vista show and tell ideas – Debbie was thinking about something to use for Vista to explain to visitors, like a poster with a QR code. Bill Dummit found some archived material on the Cummer Company in the Hillsborough County library, but not a lot of info specifically on Vista. Denise volunteered to help with content. John Thalacker asked about Bob McKinstry and his interest and knowledge of Vista. Jay volunteered to contact him and record an oral history.

-Vista – We had an email inquiry from Mark Gluckman thinking we should broadcast in the master plan in one of the news briefs. Peg responded that the plan hadn't been formally adopted. Also, because it's not yet on our website, it's premature.

-John Thalacker pulled three chairs out of the Cooks Building before and has been able to restore two of the three, which are now ready to be caned and repainted the original green color. He said it would cost \$100 to buy the materials. The board voted unanimously by voice vote to approve a motion to allocate \$100 to the refurbishment of two rocking chairs. (Mahar/ Feiber)

-Merchandise – Linda Curtis offered for Friends to sell her book, but we decided not to take her up on it because we can't ship books efficiently.

-Organizing shirts – we completed an inventory after the Arts Festival and also discussed reducing the variety of the inventory to help keep merchandise straight. Jeri, Bill, Dan, Ron and Denise will help on the merchandise committee and also review shipping costs with the planned US Postal Service postage increase.

#### Reports

-Governance – nothing to report.

-Finances – Ginessa reported in addition to the Treasurer's Report we received a \$600 gift to print more Junior Ranger Books and also a donation from Thrivent.

-Outreach – Debbie Meeks reported we've had a great four months of memberships, which is leveling off. She also plans to redo the paddling maps and hiking trails materials this summer.

-Communications – Denise reported for Peg. (Report in Drobox)

-Refuge Support – Ginessa reported Debbie Jordan's report on Suwannee 2 is in Dropbox. Scott reported the Pepper Busters are on hiatus after having an end-of-season get together to clean out and inventory the equipment trailer and properly dispose of chemicals.

President Ginessa Mahar adjourned the meeting at 11:57 a.m.

Respectfully submitted by Secretary Paul Ramey