

## **DRAFT Minutes**

### **Friends of the Lower Suwannee and Cedar Keys National Wildlife Refuges May 17, 2017 Meeting Agenda Refuge Headquarters**

**Present:**

**Board Members at headquarters:** Libby Cagle, Bill Dummitt, Peg Hall, Russ Hall, Doug Maple, John McPherson, Debbie Meeks, Maria Sgambati, Margy VanLandingham, Mackenzie Russell, Jim Hoy

**Board Members attending by phone:** none

**Refuge Deputy Manager:** Larry Woodward

**Guest:** Belinda Nettles

1. The meeting was convened at 10 a.m. by Russ
2. **Agenda** adoption was moved, seconded, passed.
3. **Treasurer's Report** was reviewed and it was recommended that the budget be adjusted in the future to raise the budgeted allotment for "Website, Software, Etc." The Neon software will require a larger yearly portion of the budget than is currently reflected, so more funds will be required for this area of the budget in the future.

*A motion was made, seconded and passed that the Friends' budget will be adjusted in the future to raise the allotment for "Website, Software, Etc".*

4. **Vista** developments and progress report:  
Guest Belinda Nettles presented her proposal to plan the use of the Vista property as a visitor contact area. Belinda is a PhD candidate in Urban & Regional planning at UF. She is asking for a negotiable payment of \$2500 (\$20/hour for approximately 125 hours of work) as well as a retainer of \$250 to begin the work of planning the lot use. This amount is already discounted, we will negotiate the rate if we do not get the NFWF grant or do not get as much as we ask for. As of now, we still need cost estimates of implementation, installation, and maintenance. Belinda will engage an architectural engineer to examine the buildings on the property and make recommendations/estimates. Belinda will also engage a company to provide an official survey for the full property, which will be necessary for construction purposes in the future.

The Friends will be moving forward with the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation grant due on July 11<sup>th</sup>, 2017. It was decided that this grant be written for the planning phase of this project, which is allowable via the grant foundation. The grant will include the following expenses:

- Belinda's full, non-discounted hourly pay and retainer

- \$1,000 for the printable and presentable graphics from Belinda's planning design
- Other expenses such as travel and direct expenses for Belinda
- Cost for structural engineer to examine buildings on property
- Cost for pre-construction survey of property

There is potential to include the in-kind hours Belinda has already put toward this project as well as the property taxes the family still pays on the property in the NFWF grant as matched funds. John McPherson will take on the task of writing the NFWF grant proposal utilizing Belinda's planning proposal. He will deliver these documents to board members as soon as possible and has guaranteed it before the next board meeting on June 21<sup>st</sup>.

***There were no objections to moving forward with this plan for the NFWF grant and Ms. Nettles' proposal.***

**5. Volunteer Visitor contact program:**

A Volunteer Visitor Contact Program Committee was formed to lead the planning and implementation of the volunteer program. The committee will meet this summer to organize the new program. This committee includes:

- John McPherson
- Russ Hall
- Debbie Meeks
- Bill Dummitt
- Libby Cagle

The main focus of this group will be to plan logistics of utilizing volunteers to provide reliable coverage for visitor contact at the refuge. Currently, we have a need to clean up the entryway of the log cabin to ensure volunteers can sit cleanly and comfortably in that area to provide visitors with the best experience. It was presented that perhaps two volunteers should be present each at each shift for security reasons as well as to make sure there was coverage in case one could not come for that shift. The idea of using a Google calendar to organize volunteer shifts was given. It was decided that volunteers would not need to utilize the LSNWR USFWS internet, so there would be no need to receive government cards to be present on the refuge. We will need to develop some type of dress code or specific volunteer t-shirts for volunteers to wear while they are "on duty". It was also suggested to install a key lockbox outside of the refuge HQ fence, so one key can be kept there instead of providing all participants with a key to the compound. These logistical issues will be covered and discussed in the visitor contact committee.

**6. Clyde Butcher**

The renowned nature photographer will visit Cedar Key in mid August. Linda is willing to help show him around the Refuge and Doug will help if water tours are needed. If anyone has ideas for photography sites, send to Maria.

**7. Refuge report- Larry**

- Shell Mound's history has been reinterpreted by archeologist/historian Ken Sassman from UF. New informative signs detailing history will be out by the end of the summer on the Shell Mound trail. An area of vegetation was cleared in Shell Mound as well.
- SRWMD is working with Refuge to understand the hydrology of the roads and dikes, with an eye toward returning the flow of water to something closer to the flow before the timber companies built the roads.
- The Refuge is in a FIRE SEVERITY code, but luckily because there has been no threat of lightening, there is no ignition source. 15 year records of dryness have been broken
- No birds are nesting at Seahorse Key, therefore the Refuge has opened the waters for the rest of the season. Beaches will remain closed.
- Andrew is working with State to close the waters and beaches of Snake Key because birds are nesting there. This has not happened yet, but all needed approvals have been received.
- An intern funded by NCBS will be working with the Refuge to develop self-guided paddling around Cedar Key. The Friends would like to work closely with him to connect their previous work on paddling trails.
- The refuge has a summer forestry intern, Matt Usry from the University of Georgia.
- The workforce-planning meeting for this region of the refuge system was held at LSNWR two weeks ago. Discussed likely 12% cut in the 2017-2018 budget for all of refuge system. The LSNWR will likely not be able to refill any vacant positions.
- The nesting platforms on Atsena Otie are being used by terns (as seen in photos), but no nesting actions have been observed.

**8. Artist in Residence Program:**

UF IFAS will no longer be providing transport and housing funding to and on Seahorse Key for the program. There has been no CK artist center response.

***No formal request made for Friends involvement in this program.***

**9. Peer to Peer Workshop – June 8-10 Ding Darling NWR**

Board member's Debbie Meeks and Mackenzie Russell will represent for the LSNWR Friends group.

**10. Committee reports**

Membership, Communications, and Inventory committees gave summaries of their written reports, which are attached. The communications committee is searching

for a better way to track donations received, as the Neon software is not user-friendly in finding this information. The membership committee shared that they will work with Larry and other refuge staff to update all panels around refuge, as some have not been updated in years. Two new maps are also available from state organizations that specify information in the Big Bend area. These maps will be ordered to hand out in the refuge kiosks and at the visitor area of the log cabin. They are free from the state.

**11. New business:**

***A motion was made, seconded and passed that the Friends' Annual Meeting will be fixed for all future years as the LAST SATURDAY IN FEBRUARY.***

A fall membership meeting/social was presented as a potential way to keep members invested and present in Friends' business in the fall season. The idea of a speaker and then a social was presented as a possible means of a meeting. Debbie added the thought of utilizing the date of October 18<sup>th</sup> in Suwannee as they are already doing a clean-up event that day and a speaker or social could easily be added to this event. This will be further discussed at the upcoming board of directors meetings.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 12 Noon.