

Friends of the Lower Suwannee and Cedar Keys National Wildlife Refuges

November Board Meeting Minutes

11/21/2023

Recorded by Pete Tirrell

Present:

Ginessa Mahar, Debbie Meeks, Boyd Kimball, Linda Kimball, Peg Hall, John Thalacker, Dan Kline, John McPherson, Ron Kamzelski, Denise Feiber, Barbara Woodmansee, Jeri Treat, Peter Tirrell

Representing the Refuge: John Stark

Guests: Jay Bushnell

Meeting called to order 10:04 am 2023.10.17

Approval Items

- Accept or modify the agenda **Vote: Accepted by all**
- Approve Minutes from previous Board Meeting **Vote: Accepted by all**
 - [Link to October Minutes](#)
- Treasurer's Report **Vote: Accepted by all**
 - [Link to Dropbox with financial documents](#)

Checking: \$3335, Money market: \$53542

Balance sheet tweaked for changes to restricted funds

Agreed to keep \$30 in small bills in trailer

John M Vista budget table just shows Friends outlays

Refuge Update

- John Stark covering for Andrew

More group pictures at events?

Burn window likely in Dec/Jan

Joey Lord retiring, possible lateral transfer to cover.

Shell mound dock project getting ready to go

Volunteer Rick has been overhauling Vista main house, added boxes around new AC units to help control heat and humidity

Road work project starting soon. Project to trim side of roads to maintain defensible fire lines. This will be an invasive process and very loud. Will involve 50-70 linear miles of roads. Concerns for pollinators and hunting. Need to communicate to hunters. John will make available a map of areas, but may not want it publicized due to equipment concerns. Guinnessa will contact Scott W and Paul R re communications. Shell mound road closed (but has been unofficially unblocked several times), access by foot only. For Solstice celebration/cleanup should be room for parking on the sides of the road before entrance.

Discussion Items

- Governance (Guinnessa)
 - Report on terms
 - [Please fill out this spreadsheet with your term dates](#)
 - Board members serve for two years, officers for 1 year of their 2 year term
 - Nominating Committee (Peg/Denise)
 - President appoints, board approves (2 board members, 1 non-board member)
 - **Volunteers? Names for non-board members?**

Nominating committee: Peg, Denise, Debbie M, Linda, Guinnessa

Open for submissions
 - Treasurer Nomination
 - **Any names?**

Open for submissions
 - Budget Committee (Peg, Ron, Linda)
 - Volunteers needed, will need to develop this committee
 - Can this be a year-round committee? We need more support for financials. Quarterly meetings?
 - Vote reports
 - Dan K. working on this. Thanks Dan!

Coming soon
 - 2-year planning meeting?
 - To discuss short term goals and ways of getting there, develop funding goals and identify initiatives should funding become available. Who do we need on the board to accomplish the goals (nominating committee)? How do the funds need to be allocated (finance committee)?
 - When? Where? In person?

Would be wonderful to thank folks for their hard work this year and socialize a bit!

Will be discussed via email, will need to meet in Dec/Jan

- Shell Mound - (Ginessa)
 - Clean up day - Winter Solstice
 - Date? Dec 21 is a Thursday
 - Lunch for volunteers?
 - **VOTE vote did not occur**
 - Sign up sheet for membership?

Perhaps brown bag lunch, maybe friends provide dessert and water.

Coordinate with pepper busters for assistance

- Philanthropy Hub application (Peg)
 - Thanks to Peg and Debbie we now have a profile!
 - <https://www.thephilanthropyhub.org/organizations/friends-of-lower-suwannee-cedar-keys-national-wildlife-refuges>

100-150 local non-profits, site run by Community Foundation of North Central Florida

Donate button requires direct access to bank account, not yet implemented

- Vista Discussions (John, Debbie)
 - ??

Waiting for final plan approval

Roofing contractor has indicated availability

Dilapidated buildings removed

No additional architectural documentation necessary

Roof on main house has been patched, no longer leaking. John M will contact roofer for estimate for replacement

Our project was not picked by UF Landscape Architecture dept, no reason given.

- Trailer
 - Outfitting. **VOTE** to pay \$310.49 for what has been done so far. Do more? Grab handle at door, house batteries?

VOTE: Approved by all to reimburse Debbie M \$310.49

Adding power (battery, solar) and other stuff to be discussed

Debbie M will come up with list of trailer improvements for future discussion.

- Insurance. Anything towed is covered under the towing vehicles insurance if the towing vehicle is involved in an accident. If the trailer itself causes an accident it

is not covered. Liability on the trailer itself is \$2,409. Liability plus collision which includes theft is \$2,509.

Debbie M and John M recommend self-insure due to cost

John M will investigate if existing board members liability insurance covers trailer liability.

Trailer depreciation question for accountant

- Volunteers to staff the mobile welcome center, how to handle the cash box?

New outreach sub committee: Denise, Jeri, Debbie M, Barbara

- CK Seafood Festival Recap (Peg, Debbie, Linda, Boyd)
 - What went well?
 - Things to change?
 - Survey?

Jay reported someone complained about space taken by trailer, probably non issue

Debbie M reported on [seafood festival survey results](#):

Have you visited any of the Refuge properties (Lower Suwannee NWR, Cedar Keys NWR, Shell Mound) during the past year?

4 answered Yes, 3 answered No

How many times during the past year have you visited refuge properties?

All 3 'no' answers in question left this blank. 1 answered 1-5, 1 answered 6-10, 2 answered 'more'

What was your primary activity while visiting the refuge properties (please circle one)

Hunting=1 Fishing=2 Hiking=2 Kayaking=3 Picnicking=1 Boating=1 Bicycling=0 Wildlife viewing=1

Friends provides outreach support and organized events for the refuge. What activities would you like to see more of from Friends (please circle all that apply or write in below)?

Guided tours=4 Events for kids=3 Group tours=2 Lectures/talks=2 Accessible tours=0 Fundraisers=0

Volunteer days=1 Opportunities for advocacy=2 Other: none

Do you feel that the Refuges need a Federal law enforcement presence to improve safety and to deter activities such as poaching, illegal camping, vandalism, theft?

6 out of 6 answered Yes

- **VOTE** to sign up for March 9 Suwannee Art Fest for \$30? Debbie M and Debbie J will do the booth.
Vote not necessary, should be part of outreach budget
- Merchandise
 - Blue Goose Passports (ORDERED)

Ordered through refuge, most sold item

- Holiday sale?

Merchandising committee to meet. Holiday discounts not necessary

New hats, sweatshirts coming

How about dog apparel?

- Annual Meeting (final Sat in February) Move discussion to email chain
 - Unlimited State in Ability demo (Boyd)
 - Short presentation?
 - After lunch demo?
 - Speakers?
 - Outgoing and incoming Presidents (Ginessa, Denise)
 - Featured speaker?
 - Subcommittee? Or full board to make decisions?
 - Merchandise?
 - Raffle? Another possible fundraiser
 - Art prints? Judy Johnson can provide more unframed prints.
 - Camping items? Cot, blue canopy with bent leg, fishing rod, coffee pots
 - Food? Kenny? Vegetarian option...
- Weebly/website (Debbie)

Debbie M and Peg negotiated a new 2 year fee \$145. Weebly was originally seeking significant price increase \$600

Subcommittee Reports

- Advocacy (Jay, Peg, Scott, Ron)
 - Law Enforcement Update

Jay contacted Kat Cammack staff, tour to be scheduled

 - NOAA's Transformational Habitat Restoration and Coastal Resilience Grants support letter
 - Corrigan's Reef restoration support letter
- Membership (Debbie, Dan)
 - [Report in Dropbox](#)
- Merchandise (Boyd, Dan, Barbara, Bill, Jeri, John, Peg, Denise, Debbie M)
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- Vista (Debbie, John, Denise, Peg, Ginessa, etc.)
 - Cook's house
 - Roof update
 - Window update
 - Main house

- Roof update
 - Pest update
 - Open the site on weekends with the outreach trailer?
- UF Landscape Architecture update
- Demolition and wood sale update
- Camper volunteer accommodation update

Reports

- Governance (Ginessa)
- Outreach and Jr. Ranger (Debbie) [Report in Dropbox.](#)
 - Trailer
 - Junior Ranger
 - Old Town Elementary Event Recap
 - What went well?
 - Things to change?
 - Anderson Elementary event December 8- volunteers needed.
 - Friends is listed and linked in the Florida Paddling Trails Association website on their Agency Partner page.
- Communications (Peg)
- Finances (Linda)
 - Mystery donation?
 - Thanks to Thalakers for donation.**

Open Discussion

- [Wish List Spreadsheet Link](#)
 - To be added to with specific item name, specs, and cost (i.e. direct shopping link)

Action Items

Ginessa will investigate possible IRS issue reported by Debbie M in regard to compensating volunteers

Adjourned at 12:01 pm`

