

Friends of the Lower Suwannee and Cedar Keys National Wildlife Refuges
December 20, 2022 Board Meeting

Members Present: Debbie Meeks, Linda Kimball, Denise Feiber, Joe Hand, Pete Tirell, Peg Hall, Boyd Kimball, Paul Ramey, John McPherson, John Thalacker, Barbara Woodmansee, Jeri Treat, Ginessa Mahar, Bill Dummitt

Guest: Pete Tirell

Representing the Refuge: Andrew Gude

The meeting was called to order at 10 am EST by President Debbie Meeks. There was a short discussion of conflict of interest forms required for all members of the board before the meeting was called to order.

Board candidate Pete Tirrell joined the meeting and briefly introduced himself as a former wildlife biologist and IT manager.

A minor change was made to the agenda.

Treasurer's report: Linda Kimball

\$4087.82 is currently in the checking account, \$35352 is in money market. There was one large donation of \$3400 from the Hudsons, designated match the remaining funds for the Vista Grant. There was also a \$2500 gift from the Halls for improvement of visitor services. A new life membership for \$250 was received from Pete Tirell and Heather Evans. There were approximately \$300 in sales for November. The treasurer's report was accepted by voice vote.

Refuge Report- Andrew Gude

Seahorse Key dock rebuild is underway, rebuilding both the large and small docks.

Several roads that have not been cleared in 30 years are being cleared.

The Tall Pine Trail is also being cleared.

Vista photo shoot was well attended and enjoyed by the participants.

The tree leaning on the cook shed will be taken down soon.

The refuge is a pilot for ADA access.

No changes at Vista re what is considered original and what is not.

The QR code panels will be printed using Refuge funds.

Vista- John McPherson

The Loci architect's visit originally set for Dec 15 was postponed by rain to Dec 28.

It seems likely that we can get the drawings in dwg format that LOCI needs from Bender and Associates to reduce the architect's bill by \$4500 but that is not definite.

Andrew is still hoping that the FWS position on assisting with Friends expenses on the cook house will be clear by the end of the year. There are a number of things Andrew may be able to cover from his budget, but this is not definite.

Visitor Contact

There was a discussion regarding staffing the desk at the Cedar Key Welcome Center. We must store our brochures elsewhere and bring to the Chamber. Denise volunteered to store our materials and

organize the volunteers. Jeri is interested in being involved. Right now this is the only place we can interact with the public. The group agreed that we should emphasize Saturdays.

Ginessa agreed to research electronic means of signup. Although we have a grant application for a visitor contact trailer at REI, there has been no response from them.

Toll Road- Outreach

There was a discussion of whether we should sign the Toll Road opposition letter provided by Jay. Debbie will sign the toll road letter for the group.

There was also a discussion of how Friends groups can address refuge funding, or lack thereof, for law enforcement and staff in general prompted by an email Andrew sent November 18 and attached to the agenda. A coalition of FL Friends groups was briefly discussed. Jay once held a meeting of FL Friends Groups in Cedar Key. A conversation could be opened with St. Marks on our visit there. Will be kept on the agenda.

Programs at Cedar Key Library

Andrew is doing a program, Debbie and Denise are doing one also. Barbara is doing a program on butterflies. The program is starting over after a long Covid shutdown and a change of leadership from Molly to Nancy.

The Vista photo shoot had a turnout of around 30 people. Two people from that group joined Friends. It helped educate visitors about the history of Vista.

The native plant society walk was well attended with about 25 people. Andrew's talk at their monthly meeting in Gainesville also drew better attendance than many of their meetings according to Mark Elliott, their president.

There was a discussion of the Solstice program at Shell Mound tomorrow. Are we allowed to sell merchandise? We do at annual meeting. 3:45 start. Last light is around 5:50. There will be guided walks at Shell Mound and Dennis Creek.

Annual Meeting

The group agreed we should have Kenny McCain cater, as usual. The speaker is Ken Sulak, an authority on sturgeon who will be talking about early Suwannee river crossings.. Our number 2 choice, Doug Sanders, wrote a book about the Cummers. Perhaps we can have a picnic at Vista and have him talk there. Before arranging something we will contact the Cummer heirs to make sure they approve of the book.

Budget Committee

The annual review of the budget occurred on December 5 with Debbie, Peg, Ginessa, and Jeri.

We will have money to cover the architect fees. It appears we will be below our sales budget, we hope to increase sales in 2023. Discussion followed about what might be included or removed from the budget.

The group discussed whether to continue library and NWRP donations.

Budget for annual meeting? It cost about \$1600 last year.

The Mobile Visitor contact unit is not in the budget for next year.

Should we include money for the Swallowtail kite program? The group seems to think it is important. Do we need to budget money for Pepper Busting? The team needs a good electric chain saw. John says the one they need costs about \$250. The refuge can't buy one because of training requirements. Is more signage needed on the Dennis Creek trail?

A budget will be prepared and presented for voting next month. Before we vote, we hope Andrew will know more about how much Vista funding he will get.

Nominating Committee

Ed, Joe and Travis are stepping back but will stay involved. Pete Tirrell and Ron Kamzelski agreed to join the board. Jane Connors is considering joining the board.

Boyd suggested offering note cards using the many photos donated by members. Ginessa suggested using pricing similar to the Sierra Club.

Debbie showed Junior Ranger Materials. There was a discussion of an image to use for the badge.

Online Communication

Report in Dropbox. Peg gave a detailed review of topics in the News Brief that were popular. Ginessa reviewed our Facebook page and what is getting attention. Photos are very popular.

Butterfly Surveys

Barbara has a new partner, Valerie Giles, for her surveys. Valerie wrote a book on moths. Monarch sightings seem to be up this year.

The meeting was adjourned before 12pm.