

**Friends of the Lower Suwannee & Cedar Keys NWR  
Board Meeting Minutes  
4/19/22**

The meeting was called to order by Debbie Meeks at 10:05 a.m.

**Member Present at HDQ**

Debbie Meeks, Peg Hall, John McPherson, Denise Feiber, Barbara Woodmansee

**Members Participating Via Teams and Phone**

Boyd and Linda Kimball, Joe Hand, Paul Ramey, John Thalacker

**Representing the Refuge**

Andrew Gude

**Call for Additions to Agenda**

Peg asked to add discussion on Policy and Procedure Manual – all agreed.

**Meeting Minutes Approval**

Board members participating unanimously approved by voice vote the minutes from the Annual Meeting and the March Board meeting.

**Treasurer's report**

Treasurer Linda Kimball reported a checking balance of \$3,476.26 and that the Money market balance remains the same at \$25,741.95.

This is a busy season for Faye with a few items still pending including sales tax filing and 990-N (e-Postcard).

Deposits this month from the Annual Meeting include \$800 in memberships, \$880 in merchandise and \$175 via Square (first time Square used and team felt it was a success). Deposits from the art festival included \$80 via Square.

Expenditures that hit the books in both March and April related to the Annual Meeting total \$2,255 (for porta potties and food).

### **Andrew Gude's Refuge Report**

Andrew gave a short report and said that his group was working on mostly routine operations around the Refuge these days. He reported that the Refuge has a long list of infrastructure projects that need funding - but not sure when funds will be available.

Andrew was asked whether QR codes would be added to posters. He reported they will get started on them very soon and they will be placed on panels mounted at locations including the Chamber, kiosks at trail heads,

and other appropriate locations. QR codes will also be put on printed brochures.

Debbie asked if there were future opportunities for historical resources grants? John McPherson reported that we probably have gotten all we're going to from the state historical grant system based on the criteria of the grants and the nature of the scope and findings of the previous report on the Vista property.

### **Vista Property**

Discussions switched to Vista and where we go from here now that the property is transferred and FWS has conducted a Comprehensive Condition Assessment (CCA). Discussions questioned where will funds come from for the estimated \$1.7 million in restoration/rebuilding of existing buildings/structures, where should efforts be prioritized to make it safe and expedite the use of some portion of it.

To date, Andrew reported that the site has been evaluated by a historical team member, FWS engineers, and the State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO).

Andrew asked FWS (Rick Kenaski) to let us know what next steps are including will a historical preservation report like the CCA be conducted, and shortly after our board meeting, Kenaski reported to Andrew in an email that it will. The email briefly discussed the steps for listing Vista on the National Register of Historic Places.

Many on the board have not seen the email yet so further discussion was postponed until everyone reads it. (Debbie forwarded it to board members after the meeting).

John McPherson's next step will be to provide Friends and Vista Family a response to the Comprehensive Condition Assessment report based on work we have done and the report we funded.

Board asked what the process is for disagreeing with proposed remodel projects? Andrew said if Friends has recommendations after reading the report, to send them to him for consideration.

It was decided to put the boat on Boat Trader and try to sell it. It needs to be water tested (buyer will be responsible for checking it out further). John McPherson will take lead on this.

Cleanup of portions of the property needs to be done as soon as possible. A workday will be announced shortly. A dumpster will be rented, and a team will decide what items will be saved, sold, or thrown out.

### **Pepper Busting**

John Thalacker called in to report on pepper busting. He gave a big thanks to Scott Wright for getting jugs filled for chemical distribution. Team was active starting in mid-November and ramped up in January, February,

and tapered off in March. A lot of work was done on Cedar Key and public lands - anything found was dealt with. Spent a lot of time on the Plantation and Lukens Tract. 500 manhours spent this year – higher than any other year.

### **Annual Meeting Feedback**

- Pulled it off despite weather and insects!
- Food was good
- Set up on Saturday worked well

### **Cedar Key Art Festival**

- Many non-profits deciding not to participate anymore
- Peg, Debbie, and Boyd felt like there was a high amount of interest in the Friends booth and thought it remains an important outreach activity
- Lengthy discussion about how to display tee shirts and still get the printed info noticed and provide conversations and education about the Refuges

### **Increase Membership Dues**

Increasing membership dues was agreed to by all. The exact amount for each designation is being further reviewed. Debbie will prepare a summary of ideas and send out a recommendation to the board.

Peg will put something on the website about increase once final decisions are made.

### **Merchandise**

Still much to decide - how many and which shirts to reorder; is it time to design a new, more “manly” shirt (alligator themes mentioned); Barbara is working on a new butterfly/moth design for consideration; or are there other items that will appeal and be profitable, etc.

The butterfly books also need to be reordered. It was agreed it was probably a good idea to order enough now and be ready for the busy fall/winter activities – however, how many to order is still being discussed. Team will report on decisions.

### **2023 Annual Meeting**

Team discussed potential speakers for next year’s Annual Meeting including:

- Ken Sulak (Early settler river crossing presentation) (sturgeon history)
- Bob McKinstry - Talk on the lumber industry (Cummer Industries)
- Native Plant Society speaker
- Someone from Washington (FWS) to come and present a boots-on-ground discussion

### **Friends Academy Application**

Proposing Debbie Meeks attend, and an application is being prepared for submission.

Friends Academy is an advanced training program for board members and staff of Friends organizations who are beyond the formative stages of development. The

purpose of the Academy is to cultivate emerging Friends leaders by providing a broader understanding of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) and enhancing skills to increase the effectiveness of Friends/Service partnerships.

### **Additional Discussion Items**

Ian Mackey from Firefly Resort would like a tour of Refuge sites. Discussion on how to organize a tour of this nature is being discussed.

Butterfly tour by Barbara Woodmansee will be scheduled for this coming September 2022 instead of April 2022.

### **Policy and Procedure Manual**

Peg is chronologically ordering policies. Big issue is finances (accounting, internal controls, expenditures, etc.) Peg will work on this section first and the finance committee can bring it to the whole board, approve, and move on to the next section.

### **Online Communications**

The April News Brief went out on Sunday evening 4/17/22 to 559 recipients. As of Monday 4/18/22, at 3:00, it had been opened by 269 addresses a total of 389 times with 125 click-thrus. The most popular were Review of the Annual Meeting, The Homepage, Spring Photo Gallery, Suwannee the Kite, and the Online Store.

There were four purchases of butterfly books apparently triggered by the News Brief item.

### **Membership**

Big uptick after annual meeting. Getting back to normal numbers.

Meeting was adjourned at noon.