

## **Friends of Arthur R. Marshall Loxahatchee National Wildlife Refuge Board Meeting Minutes September 27, 2008**

**Attendees:** Jay Brenner, Joan Davis, Steve Horowitz, Rolf Olson, Cynthia Plockelman, Jean Poleshuck, Tom Poulson, Mitch Rosenheim, Sid Rotter, Herb Teitler, Elinor Williams and Everglades Photographic Society members Jay and Jake Paredes

The minutes for the July and August meetings were unanimously approved.

### **Treasurer's Report**

Jean reported balances of \$21,287 in the regular checking account, \$3,200 in the exhibits checking account and \$25,334 in our 4-month promotional CD. The actual balance in the regular checking account will be only \$19,724 once the outstanding checks clear.

### **Refuge Report**

Rolf reported that the county is evaluating alternative sites for the landfill. He has heard no word on the rock mines.

Until the completion of the new exhibits, Rolf hopes to put temporary exhibits on display in the Visitor Center. Completion of the new exhibits is now slated for March of next year, pending release of \$300,000 approved by the state this year,

Recent/ongoing Refuge activities include hosting several members of the Everglades Foundation, a garden club, a Japanese film crew and another film crew filming the history of chocolate, starting with sugar from the Everglades. This is for a small cable channel that follows a product's life cycle to evaluate its effect on the environment.

### **Everglades Photographic Society Report**

Jay Paredes presented a timeline, list of assumptions and summary of changes to the rules for next year's photo contest (see attached documents).

The plan is to start accepting entries from early December through March, with the awards ceremony in March or April, hopefully to coincide with the Grand Opening of the new Visitor Center. The contest will be promoted through the web, through e-mail and through various forums, including a booth at Everglades Day, February 7. The board was impressed with the EPS proposals and thanked them for their efforts.

A reception for this year's photo contest entrants is planned for October. Cindy Bartosek is handling the reception and overseeing the hanging of the winning entries in the Visitor Center.

### **Liability Insurance for Store**

Steve has been shopping around for liability insurance for the store and having some difficulty finding an insurer with a reasonably-priced policy that would not include a large fixed fee on top of the basic premium. The proposals he has received range from \$800 to \$1700 per year, all for \$1,000,000 store liability and \$20,000 coverage of store contents. The board unanimously approved Cynthia's motion (Tom/2nd)

authorizing Steve to purchase a policy not to exceed \$1000 annual premium.

### **Video Script for new Visitor Center**

Tom forwarded a number of corrections and suggestions to Rolf, who has given them to Sylvia Pelizza to review. Rolf is the contact for the video producers. He wants to ensure that any suggestions do not add to the cost.

### **Everglades Coalition**

The bill we received from Susan Kennedy for dues payment is incorrectly addressed to the Arthur R. Marshall Foundation. Jean will pay the bill and correct the address information. Elinor mentioned that we have not been added to their website ( <http://www.evergladescoalition.org> ) and that an earlier e-mail request to Susan had bounced back. (Update: The address now works and Susan has added us to their website.)

Cynthia reported that the Coalition is busy planning for their annual conference to be held in downtown Miami in January. Deciding which speakers to ask has been complicated due to the upcoming presidential election, which will affect our Congressional and state representatives and political appointees throughout the government, having unknown effects on the policy and direction of federal agencies like the Department of the Interior. Plenaries and breakout sessions are planned, with a main speaker or high-level panel. A position paper will be presented to argue that an inland port should not be built in the path of the flowway needed to allow water from Lake Okeechobee to flow once more into the Everglades. The Everglades Foundation is expected to be a major participant in the conference.

### **2009 Calendar**

Elinor made one last request for ads for the soon-to-be-printed 2009 calendar. She will send an e-mail to board members summarizing the details for any prospective ad-placers.

### **Elimination of Ted Shed**

Steve reported that the store committee would be able to give up the Ted Shed in return for additional shelving in the current storeroom and in a new storeroom on the 2nd floor.

### **Volunteers Needed**

Steve expressed concern that of 14 shifts of volunteers needed to staff the Visitor Center 7 days a week, 2 shifts (on Mondays) have no volunteers signed up and 6 other shifts have only one person. When there is only one volunteer (or when there are no volunteers and a Refuge staff person must fill in) that person must stay at the reception desk and cannot handle store sales, hurting our already-slow store sales - a far cry from the days in the old Visitor Center when the store typically brought in \$50,000 annually for the Refuge.

### **Budget Committee Proposals Regarding Budget Shortfall**

After two years of falling store sales due to lack of a Visitor's Center and the continued lack of exhibits, the budget committee (Mitch, Steve, Jean) must revise both this year's and next year's projected budgets downward. Last year's projected store sales of \$40,000 did not materialize and this year's projection of \$35,000 based on year-to-date sales will not either. The Grand Opening that was expected to revive sales in time for the winter high season is now delayed until next spring, just before the start of the traditionally slow summer season. At the same time, we have new expenses such as the new cash register and the \$20,000 pledged for the exhibits. **The result is a \$35,090 budget shortfall for next year, and even this assumes the**

**unlikely figure of \$35,000 in sales.**

Mitch, Steve and Jean had met earlier with Nancy Marshall about deferring the \$20,000 commitment and, as a result of this meeting, Mitch made a motion (Cynthia - 2nd) that the money be used for exhibit maintenance, possibly as part of a larger endowment for that purpose, with an initial payment of \$8000 in 2009, a 2nd payment of \$6000 in 2010 and the final payment of \$6000 in 2011. After some concern was expressed that we would not be able to make the initial payment until store sales pick up and seeing little need for exhibit maintenance with brand new exhibits, Steve amended the motion (Joan - 2nd) to make the initial payment of \$8000 by Jan. 31 of 2010, a 2nd payment of \$6000 in 2011 and the final payment of \$6000 in 2012. The amended motion passed unanimously. Mitch will send a letter to Nancy to inform her of this decision.

Rolf stated that from a Refuge perspective, the top funding priorities for the Friends are special events like Everglades Day, food for special events such as the Grand Opening (the government would not be allowed to pay for food), and the Turtle River Times.

Mitch suggests that we raise income by raising membership dues and issuing a special appeal to our membership and that we cut expenses by publishing the Turtle River Times only once a year. (We could also consider decreasing the number of Turtle River Times printed each time - Elinor suggested, Rolf agrees.) Elinor expressed concern that membership renewals are down, but suggested including a calendar with a special appeal. Many members renew at \$50 and \$100 levels and perhaps more would if they understood the need and knew that the money would go towards Refuge programs and events and exhibits. (We should emphasize that we have NO paid Executive Director or other staff.) Many potential visitors don't realize the new Visitor Center is open. Cynthia suggested a publicity blitz including articles in the Palm Beach Post to attract new visitors and members and donors and volunteers. Cynthia made one all-encompassing motion (Tom - 2nd) that we do the publicity blitz plus the special appeal with calendar plus call for more volunteers as part of the publicity and the appeal. The motion passed unanimously. Jay agreed to write a letter to Randy Schultz of the Palm Beach Post editorial board. Mitch agreed to write the special appeal. We agreed that the special appeal should wait until November when the calendars are ready and our snowbird members will be at the address we have on file for them. Cynthia also agreed to write a letter to the editor of the Palm Beach Post thanking them for their recent article about Sylvia Pelizza and her arrival at the Refuge.

Another suggestion for reducing expenses would be not to fund the food for the VIP reception the night before the Grand Opening of the new Visitor Center. The cost has been estimated at \$8500 and it is not clear how this can be funded with the current sales outlook. Elinor made a motion that we defer discussion of this until we know exactly when the Grand Opening will be and how much money our special appeal was able to raise. The motion passed unanimously.

The budget committee provided a handout with a detailed summary of the budget and their proposals discussed above.

**Palm Beach County Visitor's Map and Guide**

Jeff Kramer put Steve in touch with CTM, the makers of a Visitor's Map and Guide for Palm Beach County. For \$750, they will design an ad for our Refuge and include it in their brochure, which they stock at numerous hotels, Chambers of Commerce, bus and train stations, car rental agencies, etc. all over the county - 125,000 brochures. Steve made a motion to buy the ad. The motion passed unanimously.

**Friends Annual Meeting and Luncheon**

A date has not been set for the Friends annual meeting, which must be held in January in order to elect our

board members, and the luncheon, which we agreed at last month's board meeting to hold on the same day. In the past we have held the meeting on a weekday evening and the luncheon on a weekday at noon. The suggestion agreed to last month was to hold them both at the Refuge on a Saturday, with the meeting inside the Visitor Center auditorium from 10AM - noon and a picnic luncheon to follow on the deck behind the Visitor Center starting at noon. Because we had had a complaint from a member who observes the Jewish Sabbath and would be unable to attend on a Saturday, we discussed the possibility of a Sunday afternoon meeting followed by a picnic luncheon later in the afternoon instead. We wanted to avoid a weekday luncheon that our working members have complained about not being able to attend. (And Jay could give us a swamp tour afterwards on a weekend at the Refuge!)

The meeting/luncheon committee consists of Joan - chair, Jean - assistant, and a yet-to-be-named Friends member who is not on the board. Elinor made a motion (Tom - 2nd) that Joan, Jean and Rolf meet and select a Saturday or Sunday in January for the date. The motion passed by all except one - Steve felt the meeting should continue to be held on a weekday evening as it has in the past. Jay pointed out that our evening meetings have been sparsely attended and Elinor pointed out that many of our elderly members do not drive or do not drive at night and are reluctant to attend an evening meeting.

### **Request to Fund Everglades Youth Camp for Julie's Students at Greenacres Elementary**

Julie was unable to attend the meeting, so Jay read her e-mail requesting the board to consider funding a portion of the \$3000 her students must raise to go to the Everglades Youth Camp held annually near the J. Corbett wildlife area. Julie is a 4th grade teacher at Greenacres Elementary, a Title I school where most of the students are on the free and reduced lunch program due to low socioeconomic status. Julie is also looking for volunteers to go with them, in particular she needs a certified life guard and a certified canoe instructor. (Her letter with more details is attached below.) Mitch made a motion that we donate \$200 (Cynthia - 2nd). The motion failed, with 3 in favor and 4 opposed. Several board members expressed interest in making individual donations, so Elinor will circulate Julie's note to all board members.

### **Book Signing October 11**

Anne Ake will hold a book signing at the Visitor Center on October 11. Tom recommends her new book for the store: "Everglades: An Ecosystem Facing Choices and Challenges".

### **Next Meeting**

Next meeting will be Saturday, October 25 at 9:00 AM.

Elinor