

Meeting Minutes

Board of Directors' Meeting

Friends of the Arthur R. Marshall Loxahatchee National Wildlife Refuge

February 22, 2014, 9:00 a.m.

Present: Elinor Williams (President), Rolf Olson (Refuge Manager), Judy Colvard (Vice-President), Tom Poulson, Kay Larche, Harvey Eisen, Mike Winokur, Jay Paredes, David Lurie (Treasurer), Tony Lang, and Linda Steinmuller (Secretary).

Absent: John Marshall, Pauline Stacey, Max Wald and Steve Horowitz

President Elinor Williams opened the meeting at 9:05, with a quorum present

I. Welcome new board members Tony, Linda

II. Election of Officers. The Motion passed to accept slate of officers and new secretary. Mike Winokur motioned for ballot of officers and Judy seconded the motion.

III. Minutes. Minutes from the January 25, 2014 meeting were approved

IV. Reports

IV a. Refuge report (Rolf)

Focus Group meetings for the Urban Initiative are planned for Thursday, March 6, at 10am & 6pm.

Envirothon was held Feb 21 and went well. While there were fewer teams, the interest was high. One of the Jupiter teams won.

Nat Reed is visiting the refuge today for a tour.

The PBSO completed a 2 day airboat training (MOOC) last week.

The Volunteer Luncheon date has changed to March 26, 2014.

Still waiting on refuge budget.

IV c. Treasurer's report

The Treasurer's Report was presented by David Lurie. David reports that income and store sales are steady. Question about what's included under Refuge repair funds. Visitor Center repairs are not covered under Refuge budget. The Visitor's Center opened in 2009, and the contract included 5 years support of exhibits. The Friends agreed to raise funds and take care of the exhibits over time.

IV d. Gift Shop report

Harvey Eisen presented the Gift Shop report. Sales in January were \$5600. These are very good sales, especially considering lost days due to area flooding.

Harvey questioned the expense to the Friends for the outdoor tent at Everglades Day. Elinor will find out if the tent is a charge against the gift shop or paid by the Everglades Day Committee. Harvey also questioned whether the profit of the outdoor tent justified the labor and time intensive process to set up the tent. After the expense of the tent, the profit made outdoors was only \$150. The gift shop sold more than \$1100 in merchandise that day.

A letter by Harvey sent to the Everglades Day committee last March, stated our gift shop would not buy the ED t-shirts if they arrive late. However, due to a mix up in communications, 45 shirts were purchased for the store and will be sold. If the store committee is not in charge of the design and purchase of T-shirts, Harvey says the store will not sell them next year. His reasoning is that the T-shirts sell best prior to Everglades Day and not afterwards. Kay reported that the process to select the T-shirts was delayed and this caused the late arrival. The Audubon Society is shifting the central role of the Everglades Day committee to the Friends next year.

A discussion of the store policy regarding new items was reiterated by Harvey. Store policy is that all new items must be approved by Rolf, all purchases must have a purchase order and PO#, and no purchases will be honored outside this process.

There was a discussion on the amount of input the Friends Board has regarding the store merchandise. Elinor's view is that the Friend's Board should have more input, since the store sales and profit directly impact the Friends' budget. Harvey believes the Board does not have experience in merchandising. The issue was deferred for future discussion.

Tony suggests that board members spend a shift at the store to learn more about what visitors look at and buy.

IV e. QR System – Jay Paredes reports that the recording work is complete, and he's now working on the audio segments. This is going slowly, but once the audio portion is done, the next step is the video work. Signs will be done afterwards. Jay reports there are some expenses, including the purchase of a music license from a UK company. His target date is to have this running in June.

IV. f. Photo contest; Jay Paredes reports that there are 3 entries so far, 2 submitters need to be contacted to re-submit due to errors. Jay wants to bring in new volunteers to run next year's contest, to review the process and see what can be refreshed and improved. The discussion outcome is to include a request for help in the next Gator Tales newsletter.

IV g. Everglades Day

Comment from Elinor regarding the tent. The tent didn't make much money and cost the store a lot of extra time and expense. But, a number of groups have tents to hand out literature.

Maybe we should use the outdoor tent to promote Friends membership and point visitors inside for purchases at the gift shop. Have brochures and maybe display items in the tent. Have Friends cover the tent cost. Another option is to set up small table in high traffic area. Tony suggests a table or pop up tent front and center where buses drop off visitors.

PR – There was no mention of Everglades Day in the Palm Beach Post; they were contacted but didn't run anything. The hard copy press releases weren't picked up well. Comment that online promotions via Facebook, Twitter, etc. are needed. Not just for Everglades Day, but also for tram tours, canoe tours, etc. Add committee to look at promotion? Suggestion to look at advertising in local movie theater (pre-movie ads are under \$200/month. Or, link to a college marketing department, where some resources could be free. For example, WXEL works with Lynn University. Another possibility is spending money for promotion or finding an underwriter. Tony Lang volunteered to start a PR committee, and will talk to a contact at 105.5.radio.

The tracked attendance was 2,850 for Everglades Day. While down from previous years, the event was very well run and visitors seemed quite pleased. The canoe team managed 340 free canoe rides on 18 canoes.

IV h. Fundraising Consider a fishing tournament for fund raising, and maybe ask a fishing group to lead? Also consider an event at the opening of the QR system that can help with fundraising (need to review grant terms regarding any restrictions). And, getting a corporate underwriter would make a positive difference.

V. Bus tour No update, awaiting dates (Steve to report)

VI. New Business

VI a. Busing Cindy Bhebe's 9th graders – they are requesting funding. One concern expressed is why select one request over others? This request will be submitted to the urban initiative, as it seems well suited for this.

VI b. New business – Tony Lang reports that the tram tours are a big hit and booked up 2-3 weeks advance. Can we look at a second tram? One question is whether it makes sense to run the tram in the summer months, given the low summer attendance. Suggestion to use tram photos in the PR movie ads. Tram tours are free, but can accept donations to the Refuge.

VII. Announcements

- a. Cassie is leaving early for a 2 month job opportunity in North Dakota. Expect a request to fund another intern (\$75/week). Currently funded through June
- b. Plaque awarded to Friends at Envirothon held on Feb 21
- c. Microwave donation – thank you to Gabriele Little
- d. TV donation – thank you to Pauline Stacey
- e. Walgreen's continuing donations of water & cleaning supplies – thank you to Gabriele
- f. Other

- a. Audubon society sells PB County bird checklist brochure for \$0.50; There are other bird lists, but Audubon is local. Harvey will look into whether the store committee is interested in selling the brochure in the store.
- b. Elinor ordered additional Gator Tales copies after nearly running out of the original order before the end of December.
- c. NW refuge system – Judy attended this lunch. The luncheon was paid for by the Friends.
- d. A Lifetime member reported that their free airboat ride was not honored. Should we looking at setting expiration dates, party size limits? Similar comments on canoe rides. What are the views on whether this this benefit should be continued? **A motion was made and passed that Friends not continue the free ride incentive program for Lifetime Members.**

VIII. Next BOD meeting date – March 22, 2014 9:00am

The meeting adjourned 11:17am

Respectfully submitted by Linda Steinmuller