

Meeting Minutes

Board of Directors' Meeting

Friends of A.R.M. Loxahatchee National Wildlife Refuge

November 13, 2016, 9 a.m.

Present: Elinor Williams (President), David Lurie (Treasurer), Tom Poulson, Cathy Patterson, Harvey Eisen, Harvey Lee, Jeff Kramer, John Siegel, Steve Henry

Absent: Judy Colvard (Vice President), Mike Winokur, Linda Steinmuller, Bill Ross, Jay Paredes

1. **Welcome** – President Elinor Williams opens the meeting at 9:12 a.m. with a quorum present.
2. **Minutes of the previous meeting** - Minutes of the previous meeting on September 10, 2016 were approved.
3. **Reports**
 - a) **Refuge Report** – Steve Henry reporting.
 - Bill Raitter, last of the Biotech's, left at the end of September. There are now no biotechs. There are 2 SEA interns, Ashley and Joseph, who will be leaving in January, so there is no one to support biological programs.
 - Jonathan Glueckert, has been hired as a Lygodium Researcher, who has been hired into a 3 year position to research and improve the control of lygodium. He is living on site and has an office here at HQ.
 - The Urban Refuge Coordinator position is awaiting approval and hoping to have new employee on board by end of calendar year. It is one of 14 coordinator positions in country.
 - Lew Hecker has returned to his regular Weds thru Sunday schedule.
 - RV campers are scheduled to return within the next month. All 3 pads will be occupied at least through February.
 - Canoe trail maintenance has just been completed. Looking to increase cuttings to 3/year instead of 2/year because of the rapid growth. It costs approximately \$5,000 per treatment.
 - Meeting held with Joy Blackwood and Mark Musaus from NWR Association, providing good resources on the urban refuge program. We met with various urban partners and they will continue to be helpful as the second round of plans are due in January.
 - Working with Corp of Engineers (COE) and SFWMD to select an acceptable location for the new fee booth on Loxahatchee Road. It will be moved west and south of current location since it needs to be off the crest of the levee. Awaiting the final 2 permits from the COE.
 - The Go Board in the Visitor Center is working and encouraging people to try it out. Still working with the developer to make improvements and increase responsiveness. Will formally unveil it when we feel it is ready.
 - Wastewater treatment plant has been completely rebuilt for the Refuge. The Plant is online. The leach field (mound) where the septic system is located cannot be driven on. Will put something there to prevent vehicles from driving and/or parking on it.
 - Ana Ruiz is planning the staff holiday party sometime between Thanksgiving and Christmas and we would like to invite the Friends to join us. Will be during the day with a main dish provided.
 - Everglades Day is scheduled for Saturday, February 11, 2017 and the 2017 Theme is "Mother Nature's Magic Show". Please mark your calendars.

- b) **Treasurer's Report** – David Lurie reporting, as of the end of October, the non-store income was \$900 and total income was \$3,005. Received 2 new memberships in October, \$250 from the Marshall Foundation and the Miscellaneous accounts have not changed significantly from prior report.
- c) **Gift Shop Report** – Harvey Eisen reporting, for the end of October sales are down \$1,200 from this time last year. Harvey has checked with Serena and approximately the same numbers of people are coming into the Visitor Center as last year. We have a new supply of T-shirts. Cathy suggests advertising on the web page, and Elinor suggests that a Fund Raising Committee be created with the new Board.
- d) **Financial Report** – Elinor Williams reporting and reviews the Budget from October 2015 through September 2016, comparing overall actual expenses and includes the 2015 year to compare. This review shows that store sales are down \$8,000 from 2015. There have been additional donations and memberships this year, however, the estimates for this year are off primarily because grant monies have not been realized. Expenses for this year are as expected. Elinor reviews the Profit and Loss portions of the written handout as well as the Balance Sheet (see attached).
- e) **Nominating Committee** – Cathy Patterson reporting, there are three people willing to run for open Board seats (there are 5 open seats): Sue Rowe agreed to do Secretary even though she is a snowbird, she is willing to work with the Board; Denise Valentin; and Gabby Little. Denise has been working on the Facebook page and she is willing to work with Mike and Jeff about grant writing. Another person Cathy and Elinor would like to recruit is Carol Dieringer. Cathy recruited her on a Facebook post seeking volunteers and Carol responded. Elinor has asked Peter McKelvy to run on the Board and Elinor will follow-up with him.
- f) **Fundraising/grant writing** – Elinor reporting, Mike wrote up a report which will need to be reviewed when he is at meeting, today focus on two things about grants: *Everglades Day and bus trips*. Discussion about buying a new tram since one is needed. The Refuge management stated that this is not a priority at this time. Jeff discusses hiring a fund raiser to help raise money. Elinor would like to work with Denise, Linda Salzman (grant writer) and Peter McKelvy since they have experience in this area of grant writing and fund raising. She would like to focus on Everglades Day since the money expected for that has not come through. Our biggest immediate need is to apply for a grant for Everglades Day. Bus trips are important too, since it is good public relations to get school children to come to Refuge. Review of priorities made for this year: 1. bus trips which we are doing, 2. hiking trails which we have been asked to put on hold, 3. support an intern which we will be doing, and then ongoing things like Everglades Day which we know the grant did not come through on. It might be time to revisit our priorities since it is a new fiscal year. Elinor asks if she can pursue working with Denise and Linda immediately to write another grant for Everglades Day and all are in agreement. Jeff mentions he gave a list to Mike about 2 years ago of local organizations that give grants specific to the Refuge needs and would like to have that list of 25-30 names available. *Fundraising appeal*. Elinor is looking to send out a separate letter to support the Refuge. Discussion about a letter that Martha Musgrove wrote about the Refuge. *Membership drive*. Develop a membership committee with new people on the Board. Steve discusses fewer numbers of volunteers working at the Refuge from previous years. One way to recruit volunteers is to ask people on tram rides. Steve suggests outreach to local Hispanic and Haitian communities to include them on the Board as we are now an Urban Refuge. Elinor suggests that we keep track of the Friends volunteer hours that work in gift shop, with the art show, photo contest, clean-up, etc. Many volunteer hours are not being recorded, and we need to make sure volunteers understand that funding for the Refuge is partly dependent on accurate reporting of volunteer hours.
- g) **Legislative Report** – Elinor reporting, SFWMD held a Governing Board meeting on last Thursday. Mark Musaus from the NWR Assoc. spoke at the end of the meeting about saving the Refuge. Mark Musaus was involved with the original lease agreement between the Refuge and the SFWMD, and he spoke about the need to continue to work together in cooperation and collaboration between the two agencies on goals to maintain the Refuge. The Board made statements at the meeting that they would keep the boat launch area open if and when they take over the Refuge so that the public can still use the area they use now. At that meeting there was no discussion about how they would staff the Refuge, if and when it closes. SFWMD Board members did not speak favorably about the Federal management of the Refuge and ask questions about why the Refuge doesn't ask for more money. There is one Board member who is supportive. The Action Alerts are generating a lot of public letters to protect Refuge at the Governor's and National levels. SFWMD has not issued the second letter as of this time.

Discussion about the differing missions of the SFWMD and the Refuge – where the Water Management District's is water management and the Refuge's is to protect wildlife and its habitats.

4. Unfinished Business

- a) **Funding for intern** – Elinor reporting, at last Board meeting there was discussion to fund and there was a discussion about the tight funding and lowest amount in the checking account ever (\$12,000). Steve discussed the need to discuss with Rolf and needs to know a figure which the Board will agree to. There are other opportunities that he and Rolf will be applying for as well so that hopefully, other sources can provide additional funding and more interns throughout the Refuge. Steve will talk with Rolf about the maximum of \$12,500 for 6 months from the Friends and get back to the Board next week about what can be done.
- b) **QXC/bunkhouse Internet issues** – Elinor reporting, Hurricane Matthew took out internet access to the bunkhouse and they have been without internet access for 6 weeks. The QXC has told us that they need to install more equipment at more cost, which we already have a three year agreement and have paid for installation which isn't working. We are not sure of other options or whether fiber optic service is a viable option.
- c) **Speakers Bureau** – Elinor reporting, discusses need to have someone oversee it since Bill Ross is not available. John Siegel discusses working on it while Bill has been out, and asks if there is a program that can be followed, Steve Henry said there is one and will share. There is a Speakers Bureau computer in the upstairs storage area. It is old and hard to use. Steve will discuss where the Refuge Staff are in developing the power point presentation.

5. New Business

- a) **Photo Contest** – Cathy reporting, discussion is to accept photo contest entries from 1/7/17 to 4/2/17, it is about 2 weeks earlier than last year, this will allow the judge to have for 3 weeks to make a decision and then Jay can finish his part and ask to have awards ceremony on 4/23/17. Cathy will check with Jay and Rick on those dates. Also, we need to use the foam boards instead of the old frames that kept falling off the walls and breaking this past year. Elinor adds that there should be added to application: no water marks. Cathy suggests also adding that the fee price be raised from \$10 to \$15. There was a discussion about allowing volunteers to enter the contest as long as they do not have a connection to the judge. Cathy discussed the need to find a judge, Elinor suggests the Everglades Photo Society which Jay knows the contact there. Cathy updated the Board on the status of the Cookbook publication also. It should go to print this week and ready for sale by mid-January.
- b) **Annual Meeting** – Elinor reporting, requesting to have it on January 29 which is a Sunday.
- c) **Night Sounds exhibit** – Elinor reporting, the exhibit was torn possibly by a wheelchair or stroller. Steve states he has looked at it and it needs to be refreshed or replaced because it has several tears and holes in addition to the new ones. There is an Exhibit maintenance fund with \$17,000 and perhaps it can be used once there is an estimate of what it would be to replace it. Steve suggests that when the contractor comes to give an estimate, it might be worth looking at exhibits that need refreshing as part of the estimate. The Airboat exhibit no longer vibrates, and this should be looked into.
- d) **Brick special** – Elinor reporting, discussion about a two for one brick special in the months of November and December and to offer this special this year, Board members agreed it is a good promotion producing greater brick sales. David discusses the new brochures for the brick sales.
- e) **Lee Road cleanup** – Elinor reporting, discussion we do 4 per year and sometimes piggyback on other cleanup organizations, we have done them in September, December, April, and June. This year we did one less. David says he saw the Boy Scouts out there recently weeding the side of the road. Cathy suggests we do one at the beginning of the year.
- f) **Comments on implementing Friends priorities** – Elinor reporting, this is in reference to the document from Sallie Gentry. Discussion about the Refuge issues with the SFWMD is determining our priorities right now; Elinor sent the document around and received no comments from the Board except from Jeff, asking for any comments now.
- g) **Other** – Harvey Lee reporting on the problem with public access to the Refuge when Bedner's has a big event. He has heard people were turned away. Someone who worked in the Visitor Center on a Saturday called the

Sheriff's Dept. to have them make sure people could get in and this helped. Discussion about setting up a table at Bedner's Pumpkin Patch festival, Elinor says there have never been any volunteers to do it. Elinor states that we have QR signs made that can be put up to introduce the public to the Refuge at Bedner's, Lyle's, and 20 mile bend area. Steve will check to see what signs are available.

Elinor reporting on John Marshall, this is about an award in his memory. Elinor distributes a sheet about presenting the award written by Pauline Stacey. John and Nancy were on the Friends Board for many years. There is a discussion about sending Pauline Stacey to an EvCo conference in Sanibel in January and the amount of money to allocate and support this. There was a discussion that we should be represented there with an exhibit table. Seven Board Members agreed to spend \$250 for an Exhibitors table, in addition to the \$350 we already pay for the registration fee, and one Board member dissenting. Elinor speaks about Pauline's work on getting the Everglades Counsel involved with the SFWDM meetings to protect the Refuge.

6. Announcements

- a) **Art Contest** – Elinor reporting, we need volunteers, it is scheduled for Nov 13 at 1:00 pm. We have 74 paintings which is twice what we had in past.
- b) **Lagoon Fest** – Elinor reporting, it is scheduled for today and Sue Rowe is representing us at that event.
- c) **Fire Fest** – Elinor reporting, Denise Valentin represented us on Oct 22 at Jonathan Dickenson State Park
- d) **Boynton Forum** – Sun Sentinel reporter Jan Engoren went on a field trip with Plumosa, Serena also there, and she did a nice reporting of the \$4,000 donation. She will do an On the Spot interview with Cathy. There was a discussion about involving the press more at our events.
- e) **Gator Tales** – Elinor reporting, plan to get one out next week.
- f) **Calendars** – Elinor reporting, they are available please take them your doctors and businesses you use.
- g) **LICA** – Elinor reporting, Local Independent Charities of America and we have received more funding from this year.
- h) **Other** - None

7. Next meeting is scheduled for January 28, 2017 Saturday, at 9:00 am

8. Meeting adjourned at 12 noon.

Respectfully submitted by Sue Rowe