

Board of Directors Meeting Minutes - August 27, 2019

Those Attending:

Bill Gette, President; Lynette Leka, Treasurer; Directors Doug Chickering, Weston Forsblad, MaryMargaret Halsey and Dave Williams; Director Kaytee Hojnacki via teleconference; Kate Murray, Secretary; Sharon Ware and and Maria Parisi, PRNWR

Call to Order: 6:05 p.m.

Approval of Minutes: The July 23rd regular Board meeting minutes were approved as edited.

Refuge Staff Update

- Maria reported that the Marsh Loop would re-open tomorrow morning; this provides an opportunity to showcase the new section. Matt Poole prepared a video to post on FB describing the project. The Environmental Assessment for the Dune Loop's re-routing has been issued; the comment period ends September 30th. Staff hopes that the construction contract to replace all the remaining Hellcat boardwalks will be awarded around September 1st. This project will require a full closure of both loops for approximately one year, beginning sometime in October. Dave emphasized how important it is for Parker River NWR to be completely transparent about what is happening - to have large signs posted in conspicuous places at Hellcat and the Gatehouse, and to post updates on the website and FB pages for Parker River NWR and the Friends.
- Gareth's fall deployment for border security has been cancelled.
- Two new road signs have been installed on the Refuge Road cautioning drivers that birds may be in the road during migrating season. The refuge is ordering at least one small radar speed sign (which will be moveable) to improve speed awareness among visitors.
- Friends members who participate in volunteer projects should send their work hours to Jean for her records. (This does not include hours spent on business and administrative issues.)
- As reported last month, USFWS cooperatively manages the Northeast Canyons and Seamounts Marine National Monument with NOAA. Maria announced that NOAA will be conducting several dives in early September that will be live-streamed. NOAA's ship, the Okeanos Explorer, will use their remote operated vehicle (ROV) to collect baseline information about the area; the dives will be narrated by NOAA scientists. Maria asked if the Friends would allow use of the tablet purchased for the Visitor Center desk so that visitors could watch the dives and if Friends would help promote these explorations, in particular the dive on September 7th which will be shown in the auditorium. The Board enthusiastically agreed to co-sponsor and promote; this will be a good use of the tablet. Dave suggested that this be a future lecture series topic.
- Maria described the training waiver program offered by the National Conservation Training Center which offers courses that may be of interest to Friends and volunteers. She will send Bill information about the program which waives course fees and reimburses travel expenses.
- Maria suggested Friends might be interested in researching the National Environmental Education Foundation as a potential future grant source.

Treasurer's Report

- Memberships are at 168 (compared with 169 last month; sadly, one member has passed away).

- Lynette reported that she currently estimates that the Hellcat donations may fall slightly short of the additional \$15,000 Friends planned to remit to the refuge; the Board unanimously agreed to use Friends general funds to reach the \$15,000.
- Lynette proposed that all memorial or general donations be placed in a special fund which would be used exclusively for scholarships or internships. Bill agreed that 100% of all memorial gifts could go to the scholarship fund but recommended that Friends retain flexibility to use general donations for scholarships or other needed expenses. The Board agreed.
- Lynette proposed that the last plank installed on Lot #1 be donated by Friends and engraved: "Thank you to Bob Springfield and crew". The Board unanimously agreed and thanked Lyn for her thoughtful suggestion.

President's Report

- Bill provided his monthly update on gifts, memorial contributions, and premium memberships.
- Bill has met with Bob about maintenance priorities; the railings at Lot #3 are underway, and it's possible that railings at Lot #7 might be the next project.
- Bill described Steve Grimley's generous offer to promote Friends membership by placing a special version of the membership brochure at the cash register at Bird Watcher's Supply and Gift. The Board reviewed the draft brochure and made minor suggestions.

Technology Committee

- Weston and Bill met prior to tonight's meeting to review technology arrangements.
- Weston has removed the plank ordering capability from the website, and he updated the plover diaries.
- Nothing new to report on the Enhanced Reality Sandbox.

Maintenance Projects

- HQ/VC Gardens: Lynette reported that the work done to rehabilitate one-quarter of the garden went well and she anticipates working on a second quarter next spring. In March/April, she will recruit volunteers. Dave proposed having the garden on next year's Newburyport garden tour.
- Pines Trail: path clearing has been completed. The platform decking is a project for next year; it might be considered for engraved plank installation.
- Lot #3 railing replacement is underway.

CoastSweep (Beach Clean-up, September 14th)

- Bill emphasized the potential to reach new members who participate in this clean-up, and he asked for volunteers to staff a table at Lot #1. Lynette will be there in the morning, Dave said he could help in the afternoon, and Doug offered to help. Bill described his many attempts to contact the dumpster vendor, Casella; they have been unresponsive. The Board regretted that Friends couldn't take this on and asked Sharon to let Jean know that she should order a dumpster.

Chamber of Commerce Event Planning (September 20th)

- Bill shared an article he drafted for the Chamber's newsletter (The Loop).
- Bill asked Maria and Sharon if a Refuge staff person would give a 10 minute talk about PRNWR; they agreed, Maria will follow up. It will be followed by a 10 minute presentation from Bill and then a Field Trip onto the refuge. Bill asked Board members to participate.

Educational Programs

- Surfcasting 101 on September 18th: Dave will introduce the speaker.
- Common Loon on October 10th: MaryMargaret will introduce the speaker.
- Ducks of New England on November 13th: Bill is the speaker.
- Kaytee reported that she's been in contact with Geoff Walker about the duck decoy program and expects it will be scheduled for January or February.
- Kate offered to show Board members how the auditorium technology operates.

Newsletter

Rave reviews have been received, great job Kaytee!

Planning for Annual Meeting

Tentatively scheduled for January 18, 2020, 10 a.m. to 12 noon. Bill and Lynette will provide reports. Doug will ask Paul Roberts to do a presentation on winter raptors.

Board Discussion:

- Membership list review - MaryMargaret asked how to approach potential members more than one of the Board members knows, and how to approach corporates. Lynette suggested placing an ad in Bird Observer seeking new members. Dave said that he preferred personal outreach for new members and he urged that Friends have greeters at the lecture series. Bill urged all Board members to pass out the new business cards.
- Fund raising strategy: Dave asked the Board for confirmation on the scholarship program. The Board confirmed that Friends will not determine the individual recipients, but rather donate to non-profit organizations which have their own selection processes in place, and Friends will work with refuge staff on internship possibilities. It was agreed to add a "donation" line to the member brochure; Dave will write some text for the website which already has a "donate" button; a donation jar will be put out at the guest lecture events. Kaytee will draft a "year end giving" solicitation e-mail to members to be sent out late fall.

Kaytee said that she will attend the Friends of Iroquois NWR annual meeting next month and will report back.

Confirmation of the Next Board Meeting Dates:

Dates are all Tuesdays from 6-7:30 p.m.: September 17, October 29, and December 3 (no meeting in November). Tentative date for annual meeting Saturday January 18, 2020, 10 a.m. - 12 noon.

Adjournment: 7:50 p.m.