

Board of Directors Meeting Minutes - December 3, 2019

Those Attending:

Bill Gette, President; Directors Doug Chickering, MaryMargaret Halsey, Weston Forsblad, and Kaytee Hojnacki; Kate Murray, Secretary; Sharon Ware, PRNWR; and guests Tom Wetmore and Ellie Bailey, members.

Call to Order: 6:00 p.m.

Approval of Minutes: The October 29th regular Board meeting minutes were approved.

Refuge Staff Update

- Sharon reported that the term maintenance position has been filled and the selected employee will begin soon.
- Hellcat Trail: Closure is imminent but no date has been set yet. The contractor will begin mobilizing soon. Sharon showed us new signage that was posted at Lot #1 Visitor Contact Station and at the cross dike at Hellcat.
- The Friends of Assabet River NWR were awarded a grant from the National Fish and Wildlife Federation Friends Grant Program in the Peer-to-Peer Coaching category. Bill reminded us that we had written a letter in support of their application and we are invited to participate in the workshop to be held in early March.
- The annual holiday potluck luncheon will be held December 20th in the Visitor Center classroom, all are invited.

Treasurer's Report

- Memberships are at 201 (compared to 196 last month).
- The Board reviewed the report dated 11/27/19. The Friends equity continues to be strong.

President's Report

- CoastSweep: Bill has been in touch with Joppa Flats and Coastal Zone Management (CZM) about the Friends taking on this role starting in 2020.
- Gulf of Maine Institute (GOMI): Bill described the Climate Cafe activities and asked Friends to consider whether it wants a role working with GOMI. He suggested that Friends conduct a naturalist tour which would teach observation skills to improve people's understanding of climate change and what average citizens could be doing. This topic will be discussed at a future meeting.
- Friends brochure: Bill asked Kaytee to look at the current version and advise on any edits prior to the next printing.
- Meg Connerton of The Nature Conservancy contacted Friends regarding a gift to honor a long-time staff member. Bill suggested setting up a fund to support a lecture program in the retiree's name. Meg will discuss with her colleagues and get back to Bill.

Memorial Committee

- Bill provided his monthly update on gifts, memorial contributions, and premium memberships.

Technology Committee

- Weston has updated the home page events information. We discussed archiving the lecture series program announcements for future reference and potentially posting links to YouTube for programs that have been videotaped.
- MaryMargaret suggested rearranging the home page so that basic info on the Friends is at the bottom and announcements about new programs, events, etc., are at the top of the page. We all agreed. Weston and Kaytee will talk about potential revisions to the website.
- Doug asked if photos of recent bird sightings could be added; Weston responded that he can post photos sent to him, and he has been posting photos of the Friends maintenance volunteers at work.

Secretary's Report

- Sharon explained that only the Friends of Parker River NWR can conduct fund-raising activities on refuge property. Only the Friends may put out a donation jar, solicit donations, or conduct merchandise transactions. Because a portion of the sale of any art work (by the monthly artists on exhibit in the auditorium) goes to the Friends, Sharon advised that the Friends rather than refuge staff should manage these exhibits. Kaytee and Kate suggested more promotion via the Friends FB page and announcements in the local newspaper. A volunteer will be needed to take this on.

Maintenance Projects

- Headquarters Deck Replacement is underway, it's a big job, Bill invites all to help.
- Maintenance Priorities for 2020: Bill reported that refuge staff will have their annual work planning meeting February 7th to outline projects. This will lead to a discussion of what maintenance projects Friends might be able to do - assisting staff or doing small projects on our own.

Educational Programs

- Ducks of New England - Bill's program November 13th was well attended.
- Decoy Program - Kaytee's waiting to hear back from the speaker.
- Spring Introduction to Birdwatching (Lecture and Field Trip): Last year, Bill did a lecture program; he proposed that this year we add a field trip. Timing would be April or early May. Doug and MaryMargaret are interested in helping.

Planning for Annual Meeting

Bill has edited the draft powerpoint presentation based on discussions at our last meeting. Bill and Kate will work on the agenda and formal notification to members as required in the by-laws. The Nominating Committee is charged with recommending a slate of candidates to serve on the Board next year. With Ted's resignation, there is one vacancy on this Committee, and the Board voted unanimously to elect MaryMargaret to the Nominating Committee. Kate will prepare information on changes to the by-laws. Sharon will do a brief presentation on the Hellcat Trail project. Tom W. agreed to be the featured speaker (30-45 minutes, after the annual business meeting).

Tom Wetmore - Discussion of Possible New Initiatives

Tom passed out a set of bar charts covering the monthly occurrences of Plum Island bird sightings from 2003 through 2019 to date; occurrences mean how many days each month a species was seen, not how many birds. The bar charts are a great visual tool for identifying trends. Doug noted that professional ornithologists are very excited about Tom's ideas. Bill asked how Friends could facilitate getting Tom's information out to people. After some discussion, all agreed that Tom's material should be posted on the Friends website, and that the new web pages would have a "debut" at the

annual meeting in February. Friends would promote this via MassBird(??), Facebook, and an article in local print media.

Board Discussion:

- **Launch of Friends Internship Fund:** Referring back to the Treasurer's report, Bill noted that Friends currently has adequate resources to cover routine operating expenses and advance fund an intern position. The Board unanimously voted to commit \$7,200 to support one intern position for 2020. Sharon asked if Friends have any preference for the scope of work for the intern. While Friends prefer biology and education program interns, we agreed that PR should determine how best to use the funds depending upon their priorities and their ability to fund interns from other sources. Bill emphasized that for the Internship Fund to be an ongoing, long-term objective, it will be important to have 100% participation from Board members before soliciting funds from our members, and he asked each of us to make a donation.
- **Recruiting New Board Members:** MaryMargaret described two prospects and will follow up with them to determine their interest. Kate suggested that Friends provide a more formal orientation for new members; she will put something together.

Confirmation of the Next Board Meeting Dates:

Tuesday January 21, 2020, 6-7:30 p.m.; Annual meeting Saturday February 8, 2020, 10 a.m.-12 noon; Tuesday March 10, 6-7:30 p.m.

Adjournment: 7:41 p.m.