



Friends of Parker River National Wildlife Refuge

Board of Directors Meeting Wednesday, April 21, 2021 6:30 p.m. Remote via Zoom

Present: Ellie Bailey, secretary; Ron DiCola; Bill Gette, president; Doug Chickering, vice president; Ted Olsson, vice president; Weston Forsblad; MaryMargaret Halsey; Matt Hillman, refuge manager; Matt Poole, refuge visitor services manager; Lynette Leka, treasurer; Dave Williams; Cheryl Smith, associate member; Peg, associate member and George Gould; Susan Grillo, associate member.

1. The meeting was called to order at 6:30 p.m. by President Bill Gette.
2. Secretary's Report: The minutes of the Mar. 17 meeting were approved.
3. Refuge Staff Update: Matt Hillman reported as follows.

*Speed bumps and other safety improvements at the Hellcat road crossing will be installed on April 27.

*The marsh loop on the Hellcat trail should be reopened in May.

*The Purple Martin colony will be set up in front of the Visitor Center where the bird feeders are currently located. In line with a national trend, the bird feeders will be removed. Doug Chickering and Matt agreed on April 23 as the day for Doug to assemble the equipment.

*Water levels will be reduced in two weeks at Bill Forward and in late June at Stage Island Pool. Mowing at Cross Farm and Bill Forward Field will be in the next two weeks. Other fields will be done in Sept.

*Problems with visitors bringing dogs onto the Refuge will be addressed soon as the Gate House will be staffed and more law enforcement officers will be on the Refuge.

4. Board Reports

Treasurer's Report: Lynette Leka reported that the Friend's financial position is good with a bank balance of \$24,867. An additional \$5,000 is needed for the Internship Fund while the Purple Martin Fund has an excess. There are currently 256 members including 15 new members since Jan. 1, 2021.

President's Report: Bill Gette welcomed associate members Cheryl Smith, Peg Gould and George Gould, and Susan Grillo. He reported on successful Pines Trail and Beach clean-ups and made special note of the contributions of the River Valley Charter School to the Beach clean up.

Memorial Committee Report: The Memorial Committee Report was sent prior to the meeting but Bill noted that he has thanked all donors.

Technology Committee Report: Weston Forsblad reported that updates from the Plover Diaries have begun and are added to the website as they come in. MaryMargaret Halsey suggested that we add more new material to the web site's homepage. After discussion it was agreed that Doug will write a new piece on the Purple Martin Project; Bill will do one on the Beach Clean Up; Dave Williams will write about returning birds; Doug will work with Cheryl Smith to write about plants in bloom; Ted and Weston will work on the Facebook page.

6. Plank Project Discussion: This project supports the Refuge by raising funds through the sale of inscribed planks. Badly deteriorated planks at the Parking Lot 7 boardwalk up to but not including the platform (due to proximity to the ocean and consequent vulnerability to damage and loss) will be replaced. The Board agreed to keep the donation amount at \$100/plank. Ted will assess the number of planks and Matt Hillman will check on the possibility of making the boardwalk ADA compliant as part of the project. It was moved and voted to replace the planks in the Lot 7 boardwalk, up to the platform, with inscribed planks at a cost of \$100 each. At the next meeting the Board will consider how to allocate funds raised, over and above the cost of replacement planks.

7. Campership Support: The Board has supported camperships for children at Merrowhawk and Mass. Audubon summer camps. After a brief discussion of this practice, Ted Olsson agreed to check our agreement with the Refuge to determine if such financial support is consistent.

8. Educational Program Calendar: The following programs were discussed.

*Saving the Marsh, Saving Wildlife, Saving Plum Island - Bill reported on many positive comments received about this program. Due to technical difficulties, recording did not begin until about fifteen minutes into the program. The recorded portion will be made available via a link on the website.

*Introduction to Birdwatching - The program will take place on Sunday, Sept. 12. Bill will lead and Dave, MaryMargaret and Doug will assist.

*National Refuge Week is Oct. 10 - 16. Dave, Ron, MaryMargaret and Cheryl will develop a community event, possibly a scavenger hunt or photo challenge to take place on the Refuge and report at our next meeting.

*The Board voted to sponsor a lecture, "The Pentucket on Plum Island" with a fee within our usual range to be negotiated by Ted Olsson and the speaker.

*The fall beach clean-up will be Sat. Sept. 25.

9. Relationship to Newburyport Chamber of Commerce: MaryMargaret explained that the United States Chamber of Commerce is advocating against the We the People Bill now in Congress. As the Friends belongs to the Greater Newburyport Chamber, she is attempting to discover what position the local Chamber might be taking.

10. Confirmation of Next Meeting Dates:

May 19 at 6:30

June 23 at 6:30

Action Items

Doug will assemble the Purple Martin Homes on April 23.

Doug will write a piece on the Purple Martin Project for the website.

Bill will write a piece on the Beach Clean Up for the website.

Dave will write a piece on returning birds for the website.

Doug and Cheryl will write a piece on flowering plants for the website.

Ted will help Weston with the Facebook page.

Ted will count planks at Lot 7 boardwalk.

Matt H. will determine feasibility of ADA compliance for Lot 7 project.

Ted will check our agreement with the Refuge re: sponsoring children at private camps.

Dave, Ron, Cheryl and MaryMargaret will develop a community program for National Refuge Week.

Ted will contact the speaker and work out details for "The Pentucket on Plum Island."