



Friends of Parker River National Wildlife Refuge

Board of Directors Meeting Wednesday, May 19, 2021 6:30 p.m. Remote via Zoom

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

Absent: Doug Chickering

1. The meeting was called to order at 6:30 p.m. by President Bill Gette.
2. Secretary's Report: The minutes of the April 21, 2021 meeting were approved.
3. Refuge Staff Update: Matt Poole reported as follows.

*The Hellcat Parking lot will be closed on Tuesday, May 25 for the painting of stripes.

*A request from Sharon Ware: Would the Friends be interested in acting as vegetation stewards and removing invasive, etc. from the Hellcat Boardwalk?

*Final way finding signs have been ordered. These signs are substantially the same as the old ones in content but have orientation panels, i.e. "You are here." Friends' input was useful in creating these new signs. When the signs arrive, the Friends work group may help with installation.

*Additional signage. A discussion of placing small numbers along the railing on the Hellcat Boardwalk for use by birders when sharing information on where birds have been sighted ensued. Matt Hillman will suggest an appropriate interval for the numbers at the next meeting.

*Two new interns, Chris and Lillian, have begun working at the Gatehouse.

*River Valley Charter School has returned until June 18 for their outdoor classroom.

Staff members Gareth Williams and Bob Springfield have set up two radar speed control devices which flash when a driver exceeds the speed limit and can record speeding data.

*The staff has compiled a list of needed tasks that the Friends could help with, including support information. Matt Poole will send a copy to Bill Gette.

*On May 20 a group of alternative high school students from Lowell will visit the Refuge for educational activities.

*Transportation fellow Ella Weber has asked if the Friends would be interested in helping with a transportation study. The task would involve data collection on traffic and safety at the refuge. Two to six volunteers would be needed on two different days in July and August. This volunteer contribution, if undertaken, has a value of \$13,000. The Board agreed to help.

4. A. Treasurer's Report: Lynette Leyka sent her report ahead of the meeting and there were no questions. She stated that our financial situation is much the same as in April and that we now have 256 members.

B. President's Report: Bill Gette reported that the Wed. Morning Work Group has been working on a kiosk for Sub-Headquarters. He has written a grant proposal to the National Wildlife Refuge Assoc. for a water system for the Visitor Center garden. (This proposal replaced one for the internship program which did not meet guidelines.)

C. Technology Committee Report: Weston Forsblad encouraged Board members to send him new articles for the website. After a question, he double checked and found that the tide chart link is still there but added a new link to the Tom Wetmore site.

5. Friends' Volunteer Projects: Bill Gette reported that a water supply is needed for the Visitor Center Garden. Matt Hillman has found that the fire hydrant line is not an option, nor is digging up the line to the Visitor Center. Other solutions will have to be found.

6. New Plank Project: Prior to the meeting, Ted Olsson sent an update on this project in which he estimated that \$30,800 could be raised. At Bill Gette's request, Ted will compose a survey for Board members and Refuge staff on their preferences for possible projects these funds might support. Board members were encouraged to send him any additional ideas. As Sharon Ware was involved in the last plank project, Matt Hillman will check with her on the purchasing process.

7. Friends Articles & Publicity: Cheryl Smith will work on a series of articles on current wildflowers in bloom on the Refuge. She will get photos of six to eight flowers now in bloom from Bill, then research and write a short article and send it to Weston for the website.

8. Education Program Calendar: The lecture on the Pawtucket at Plum Island was well attended and well received. Ted Olsson will contact the speaker, Mary Ellen Lapionka, regarding a follow-up program.

9. Longer Term Activities Calendar: Bill Gette announced that at the next meeting the Board will spend about a half hour discussing current and possible future projects, with a view towards determining where the Friends efforts to support the Refuge are most needed and most feasible. As the staff has just completed its Annual Habitat Work Plan, Matt Hillman will share this document with the Board.

10. Newburyport Chamber of Commerce and "For the People." MaryMargaret spoke with outgoing Chamber Director Frank Cousins regarding the fact that the national Chamber is opposing this proposed act to strengthen voting rights. She reported that the local Chamber is not involved in the opposition.

11. Camperships: Ted Olsson recommended that all Board members read section II of the Friends by-laws.

12. Manager's Report: Matt Hillman reported that he has participated in a study group on sea level rise and that the group will host information events on May 24 and June 3. He will send Bill Gette links and information for these programs. Matt thanked the Friends for our efforts during the pandemic saying we've done "great work in a tough time." He closed with "brighter times ahead."

13. Next Meeting: June 23 at 6:30 and July 21 at 6:30.

14. Adjournment: The meeting was adjourned at 7:55 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Eleanor Bailey

Secretary

Action Items

*Bill will send Cheryl photos of wildflowers now in bloom.

*Cheryl will write an article on wildflowers and send to Weston.

*Matt Hillman will determine an appropriate interval for number signs.

*Matt Poole will send the list of projects Friends can support to Bill.

*Matt Poole will let Ella Weber know of the Friends interest in helping with data collection.

*Ted will survey the Board and Staff re: preferred projects to be supported by the plank program.

*Matt H. will check with Sharon on the purchasing process for the plank program materials.

*Matt H. will send Bill a copy of the Annual Habitat Work Plan.

*Matt H. will send Bill links to the May 24 & June 3 programs on sea level rise.

*All Board members will read Section II of the Friends by-laws.