



Friends of Parker River National Wildlife Refuge

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

Present: Ellie Bailey, secretary; Bill Gette, president; Doug Chickering, vice president; Ted Olsson, vice president; MaryMargaret Halsey; Matt Hillman, refuge manager; Lynette Leka, treasurer; Dave Williams and associate member, Peg Gould; Ella Weber, transportation fellow.

Absent: Ron DiCola, Weston Forsblad

1. Call to Order: The meeting was called to order at 6:30 p.m. by President Bill Gette.
2. Secretary's Report: The minutes of the June 23 meeting were accepted.
3. Refuge Staff Update: Matt Hillman reported as follows.

*Crystal Bradley, a new employee, is now working at the Refuge.

*The Visitor Center is now open.

*There will be an Open House event at the Visitor Center on Friday at 1:00. Matt will give a presentation that includes a shout out for the Friends. Doug and Lynette volunteered to attend.

*Nancy Pau has asked if the Friends would be interested in helping with a pop-up swallow program. Bill volunteered and will contact Nancy.

*Artists and staff are thrilled with the frames the work crew has built.

*Matt Poole has asked if the Friends want to co-host an event with the artists.

4. Board Reports

A. Treasurer's Report: Lynette Leka sent her report prior to the meeting. She noted that we have 255 members, 13 non-renewals and 21 new members. Also, that garden expenses exceeded the budgeted amount this year due to the purchase of many new plants. Volunteer, Lorene Melvin has provided hours of expertise and hands-on gardening. Goals for the garden's restoration have been achieved and work has stopped for now.

B. President's Report: Bill Gette reported on the work of the Friends Work Group. They are working on cutting back encroaching vegetation along the Hellcat Boardwalk, on restoring the rock circle in the Visitor Center Garden and on sand clearance on the Parking Lot 1 Boardwalk. More hands are always welcome on all these projects.

5. Transportation Activities: Transportation fellow, Ella Weber, sent an update on all current projects needing volunteers prior to the meeting, then led a discussion of each one.

*Road Safety Study: As a result of suggestions by the Board, Ella chose two dates, Sat., Aug. 14 and Sat., Aug. 21 for volunteers to gather data on traffic/safety issues. She will create a sign-up email for Board members to use in volunteering to help. If more help is needed, then Lynette will email the membership. She will also add a category "impact on wildlife" to the data sheet.

*On-Boat Interpretation: Paul Aziz of the Yankee Clipper plans tours from his usual dock in Newburyport to Plum Island in Aug. and Sept. One to three volunteers are needed to circulate on the boat and answer questions. Several Board members indicated an interest and will sign up for dates with Ella.

*Car-free Day: This event will be held on Sept. 18. Volunteers are needed for many activities but the greatest need is for driving the mini-bus from Headquarters to the Refuge. Ella will send a sign-up for volunteers.

*Bay Circuit Trail Terminus: This project combines trail maintenance with some new features. The trail will officially end at Refuge Headquarters where there will be a picnic table and signs.

6. New Plank Project: Bill and Ted Olsson reported that the Pines boardwalk and platform are a feasible site for memorial planks. With a slight redesign of the platform, they estimate that the site can hold 100 engraved memorials for a net revenue of \$7,800. The next step would be to work with CNC on a timeframe for engraving the planks and to find a truck to transport them to and from CNC. While relatively modest in fund raising scope, this project, in their opinion, will generate much good will. Discussion revealed concerns about the amount of fund raising work for a relatively small goal. There was some disagreement over whether or not the public would see the project in a positive light because of frustration with phragmites and speeding. Matt Hillman pointed out that the latter two issues are being addressed and that he is working on communicating this to the public.

It was moved and voted with one abstention to continue with the plank project at the Pines Trail and Observation Platform.

7. Friends Articles and Publicity: Bill noted recently posted articles on the Friends' website, one on poison ivy by Peg Gould and one on Common Self Heal by Cheryl Smith, and praised these postings. He encouraged others to follow suit.

8. Educational Programs/StoryWalk: Ted Olsson reported that creating a story walk with Jen Bogard's ABCs of Plum Island will cost \$300, primarily for reusable stands to hold each page. The project is for families with young children, a way to encourage Refuge use and ultimately support for the Refuge. The story will be up for a short period, a few weeks to a month. A discussion followed on the location of the Walk, a temporary feature, at the Pines Trail. Board members expressed concerns about placing signs along this favorite birding trail with a focus on their possibly intrusive nature and impact on wildlife. Other sites such as Sub-Headquarters, Stage island (an underutilized trail with plenty of space for multiple signs and enthusiastic families), or Hellcat were suggested but Bill and Ted explained that each had serious disadvantages, either aesthetic, practical or safety-wise. They recommended the Pines because it is safe, has easy access, is level and is protected from the wind. After much deliberation it was moved and voted by roll call to have the Story Walk at the Pines Trail starting the week of October 12 to coincide with National Wildlife Week and ending a month later. Roll Call: Bailey - yes; Gette - yes; Chickering - yes; Halsey - yes; Leka - abs.; Olsson - yes; Williams - yes. Bill thanked the Board for their honest comments and careful deliberation.

9. Meeting Dates: August 18th @ 6:30 via Zoom; Sept. 15th @ 6:30.

10. Adjournment: The meeting was adjourned at 8:35 p.m.

Action Items

Doug and Lynette will attend the Open House on Friday, Aug. 23 @ 1:00 at the Visitor Center.

Bill will contact Nancy Pau about the Pop-up Swallow program.

Ella will edit the Traffic Study Data Sheet to add "impact on wildlife."

Ella will email sign-ups to the Board for the survey, on-boat program and car-free day.