



Friends of Parker River National Wildlife Refuge

Board of Directors Meeting
Wednesday, Aug. 18, 2021
6:30 p.m.
Remote via Zoom

Present: Ellie Bailey, secretary; Bill Gette, president; Doug Chickering, vice president; Ted Olsson, vice president; Weston Forsblad; Mary Margaret Halsey; Matt Hillman, refuge manager; Lynette Leka, treasurer; Dave Williams; associate member, Cheryl Smith; and Ella Weber, transportation fellow.

Absent: Ron DiCola

1. Call to Order: The meeting was called to order at 6:30 p.m. by President Bill Gette.
2. Secretary's Report: Action items from the July 21 meeting were reviewed. Bill Gette explained that what Nancy Pau envisions in the Pop-up Tree Swallow Program is very informal. As Board members visit the Refuge, they can share information on the migration, etc. Doug Chickering is already doing this. This discussion led to a suggestion that Board members wear some sort of identifying clothing when on the Refuge. Lynette and Ted will make a recommendation at the next meeting.
3. Refuge Staff Update: Matt Hillman reported as follows.

*Connor Smith and Lillian, seasonal employees, finish up this Friday and move on to other jobs. There will be four maintenance positions open. Matt asked for posting suggestions and will send Weston his latest ad for the website.

*Essex County is now a “red” area, meaning high covid transmission, so the Visitor Center is closed and the Refuge cannot host events outdoor with more than 50 people.

*Matt Poole has been keeping the project list up to date. Bill Gette said this list is working well, projects are being completed and Matt keeps it current. He will forward a copy to the Board and will write a piece on it for the website.

*Matt suggested that Doug Chickering's recent article on the salt panne be posted on the website and included in the Wrack Line (Refuge newsletter). Doug will forward a copy to the Board and to Matt.

*Work on marsh restoration in the area just north of the sub headquarters building begins in a few weeks. Matt will post an information sign near the project explaining its purpose. He stressed that the Board acts as his "eyes and ears" on the Refuge and that he welcomes our input.

*A very successful story hour was held recently in the pollinator garden in partnership with the Newburyport Public Library and the Spenser-Peirce-Little Farm. Shorebird programs on the Refuge have gone well, also. Weston will post Refuge programs on our website.

*Matt praised the bollard repair project, garden restoration and other Friends projects.

A viewing of a webinar on Friends/Refuge partnerships prior to the meeting led to questions about handling funds raised on the refuge by Friends groups. Lynette will work out procedures with Matt. In response to a question from Matt, Bill reiterated, and the Board confirmed, that our intent in funding an intern is that the intern have a varied experience including education, conservation biology, and maintenance.

4. Board Reports

A. Treasurer: Lynette Leka sent her report ahead and commented that there have been no major changes in our financial position or membership.

B. President: Bill Gette reported on the completion of successful work group projects at the Hellcat Trail, the Pines Trail and with the bollards at headquarters. Future projects include installing Hellcat signs, building a picnic table at headquarters and replacing the boardwalk at the Visitor Center rear entrance. In discussing the need for more volunteers for projects where extra hands are helpful, it was suggested that Friends members/and others known to be interested be contacted when an appropriate project comes up.

5. Technology Report: Weston noted that the most significant new feature on our website is under "Archived Events." This tab leads to past articles. Bill Gette encouraged the Board to sign articles. Ted Olsson volunteered to post links to articles on the website on our Facebook page.

6. Traffic survey: Ella Weber reported that the survey is on for Sat., Aug. 21 with the 28th as a rain date. Volpe will be at the Refuge on Aug. 19 to meet with staff, tour the Refuge and meet with volunteers. (2:00 at the wood shop). Ella will send materials for conducting the survey and for written feedback on traffic problems.

7. New Plank Project: Ted Olsson reported that Dan Hill at C & C is ready to engrave planks. There will be 25 16' planks and 12 6' planks. The estimated net income from this fund raiser is \$7,000. Through discussion with Matt it became clear that fall construction prep work is a

possibility given new hires. Planks can be transported and stored by the Refuge. The purpose of the project was discussed and it was moved and voted that all monies raised go to our Friends general fund. Ted will develop publicity and marketing materials with a launch date to be determined.

8. Art Shows in Visitor Center: Ellie Bailey has agreed to coordinate these monthly shows by local artists and has been in touch with Tamara Major, past coordinator. Until the Visitor Center has a stable opening, the shows are on hold.

9. Friends Articles and Publicity: Our website is looking very current and very attractive with a number of new articles and photos. Bill encouraged the Board to keep submissions coming.

10. Educational Program Calendar

Story Walk: Ted reported that all pages will be done on “H” signs and work is underway.

Intro. to Birdwatching: After discussion Bill and others decided to offer a “Part I” as a Zoom lecture and offer “Part II” in the field when the Refuge opens to groups. Dave, MaryMargaret and Lynette will contact ECOC, BBC, other groups and our members to publicize the lecture and Bill will do a write up for the website and contact the Daily News.

11. Longer Term Activities Calendar: Except for the beach clean up which will be held as scheduled on Sept. 25 and limited to 50 with the Refuge handling reservations, all other group activities are postponed. We will discuss a Friends presence at the Hellcat Dike opening in Oct. at our next meeting.

12. Confirmation of Next Meeting Dates:

Sept. 15 @ 6:30 and Oct. 6 @ 6:30

13: Adjournment: The meeting was adjourned at 7:58 PM.

Action Items:

*Lynette and Ted will choose a vest, cap, T-shirt, or other “uniform” for the Board.

*Matt will send his latest job posting to Weston.

*Bill will send the current Project List to the Board.

*Bill will write an article on projects for the website.

*Weston will post Refuge programs on the Friends website.

*Lynette and Matt will work out procedures for handling funds raised on the Refuge.

*Ted will post links to website articles on our Facebook page.

*Ella will send materials related to the Traffic Survey to the Board.

*Ted will develop publicity and marketing materials for the Plank Project.

*Dave, MaryMargaret, Lynette and Bill will publicize the Intro to Birdwatching, Part I class.