



Friends of Parker River National Wildlife Refuge

Board of Directors Meeting Tuesday, July 20, 2022 7:00 p.m. Remote via Zoom

Present: Ellie Bailey, secretary; Doug Chickering, vice president; Josh Contois, Interim Visitor Services Manager; Bill Gette, president; Lynette Leka, treasurer; Peg Gould; Matt Hillman, refuge manager; Ted Olsson; Dave Williams, Scott Millin.

Absent: Dan Graovac, Weston Forsblad

1. Call to Order: The meeting was called to order at 7:05 by President Bill Gette.
2. Secretary's Report: The minutes of the June 29 meeting were accepted. A review of action items indicated that most were in progress, had been completed or would be discussed later.
3. Refuge Manager's Report: Matt Hillman introduced Josh Contois, interim visitor services manager. Refuge staff are working on improving access to the Refuge, audio-visual upgrades, improvement to the website, new programming and new signage.

Josh overviewed the programs he is working on as follows:

- * A federal highway grant with Newburyport and Newbury in which the Plum Island Turnpike would be improved to deal with sea level rise.
- * A new platform at Stage Island
- * A new platform at Great Bay
- * An eBird station at the Visitor Center
- * The Sept. 24 beach clean up (Friends coordinate this.)
- * A new viewing scope for a yet-to-be determined site on the Refuge
- * A new wheelchair storage shed and new wheelchair

Matt spoke about public comment on the proposed discontinuance of over sand vehicle access for fishing. (The public comment period ends in eleven days.) Access is now by special permit with only a limited number given out each year. As the beach has grown narrower, vehicles can

no longer move along the beach without causing damage to wildlife/wildlife habitat. The Board is supportive of this closure. Matt will send information to Ted on the closure and Ted will write a comment from the Board. Dave will contact the Brookline Bird Club and invite them to comment.

4. Possible Friends Financial Support/Projects

Discussion of specific projects was as follows:

*eBird: Joppa Flats has an eBird set up. It allows visitors to identify and document birds seen.

*Stage Island Platform (Matt H.): The plan is to build a new one with a handicapped ramp and better visibility. There was broad Board support for projects that increase access.

*Upgrades to AV in conference room (Matt H.): This project has been done in house. The auditorium has not been done but Josh agreed to ask the contractor for an estimate.

*Removable ramp at Lot 1. Matt would welcome any volunteer input on engineering such a structure.

*Federal highway grant. The Friends support this grant and Bill will work with Matt on a statement of support. He will share it with the Board a.s.a.p.

At the end of the discussion the Board asked Matt H./Josh to develop a prioritized list of projects for Friends' funding for the next meeting.

5. Treasurer's Report: Lynette sent her report prior to the meeting but commented that the Friends is in excellent financial shape due to donations, memorials, grants and fundraising. The membership is stable at about 260.

Lynette suggested that we raise our internship stipend to \$8,000/year in 2023. The Board agreed, pending an evaluation of current interns' experiences. Bill will work with Nancy Pau on facilitating an evaluation of the experience by an intern .

There was discussion of creating a maintenance schedule for the Pines Trail, Hellcat Boardwalk and sand removal. Lynette recommended two clean-ups for the Pines Trail, one mid-April and one mid-July. Bill will create a schedule for the Hellcat Boardwalk and Scott will do one for sand removal. Schedules will be combined with the beach clean-ups a master calendar of recurring Friends activities.

Several members attended a workshop on visits to refuges by governmental officials. Dan, Peg, and Ted will form a committee to work on this activity.

6. President's Report

*The Wed. Work Group continues to work at the Pines Trail observation platform. The next set of inscribed planks will be ready in August.

*Bill will join the Refuge staff at a Yankee Homecoming booth at the Newburyport Senior Center on Aug. 4.

*The mowing of phragmites at Bill Forward and Stage Island is set for early August.

7. Lighthouse Keepers House: Ted Olsson has developed and sent an explanation of the historic value of this Refuge-owned building. He proposes adding a sign in conjunction with the Plum Island Lighthouse Preservation Society. He will meet with the Lighthouse group and the Refuge staff to discuss this project and if all goes well, he will develop a request for Friends financial support.

8. Educational Program Calendar

*Open Mic Poetry Program: Peg and Ted are interested in organizing this program. It would be held in-person at the Visitor Center.

*Speakers on Lighthouses and Native Americans are available in Aug/Sept./Oct. The Board felt these should be Zoom programs. Ted and Bill will work on specific dates/times with the speakers.

*Evening with Egrets & Swallows will be an outdoor program on the Refuge on Aug. 22 from 5:30 - 8:00. Participants can drop in at any time and stay as long as they like. Bill will do a write-up to publicize this program.

*Introduction to Bird Watching will be Sept. 7 (lecture via Zoom) and Sept 11 (field trip 9:30 - 12 noon.)

9. Next Board Meetings

Aug. 24 at 7:00

Sept 14 at 7:00

10. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 8:40 p.m.

Review of Action Items

*Matt H./Josh will develop a prioritized list of projects for Friends' funding for the next meeting.

* Bill will work with Matt on a statement of support. He will share it with the Board a.s.a.p.

* Matt will send information to Ted on the closure and Ted will write a comment from the Board.

*Dave will contact the Brookline Bird Club and invite them to comment on the closure.

*Bill will create a schedule for the Hellcat Boardwalk clean-ups.

*Scott will a schedule for sand removal from boardwalks.

*Bill will work with Nancy Pau on an evaluation of current interns' experiences.

*Dan, Peg, and Ted will form a committee to work on visits to refuges by governmental officials.

*Ted will meet with the Lighthouse group and Refuge staff regarding interpretive signage for the keeper's house.

*Ted will coordinate dates for Aug.- Oct. speakers with Bill.

*Bill will do write-ups for Egrets & Swallows and Intro. to Birdwatching.

Respectfully submitted,

Eleanor Bailey
Secretary