

Friends of the GTM NERR

Minutes of Board Meeting: Tuesday, February 10, 2009

Members Present:

Pierre Pierce, Peter Difatta, Carl Hampp, Irene Kaufman, Triss Padgett, Chris Rich, Anita Pierce, Rob Matthews, Mike Timpane

Staff Present:

Teri Webley, Mike Shirley, Angie Golubovich,

Guest: County Commissioner Ken Bryan

Excused Absence:

Nancy Schachnovsky, Kay Henderson, Bill Coleman, Jonathan Katzen

Meeting called to order at 5:10 pm by Pierre Pierce

January Meeting Minutes Approval by Pierre Pierce

Carl motioned to approve the January meeting minutes

Chris seconded, all approved none objected, January meeting minutes approved.

Executive Committee Report by Pierre Pierce

Before starting the report Pierre spoke about his experience recently when some Marineland Right Whale Project staff including Jim Haine and Pierre were involved in a joint sighting expedition involving a boat that Pierre arranged for and the project's photo plane. Pierre passed around photos of the Right Whales they encountered.

First item for the Executive Committee report is the meeting with Gail Hankinson concerning the Kayak Vendor policies and procedure.

Carl reported that the committee is working with attorney Gail Hankinson to develop policies and procedures for the Friends of the GTM Reserve to use when partnering with outside vendors. The current situation with some local kayak vendors made it apparent that such policies and procedures are needed. A general policy will be created and if needed specific policies will be created for certain types of vendors. There may be policies available around June or July as there is a considerable amount of research that Gail will be doing. Gail is donating her time for this project and the Friends extend their appreciation for the gift of her time and expertise on the matter.

The Executive Committee is open to suggestions and Carl invited anyone interested to submit their suggestions and comments via email to Teri at

GTM_Friends1@dep.state.fl.us

Executive cont.

Carl stated that the intent is to create policies that are fair to all and in the event that there was ever a question as to why a vendor was selected over another the Friends could show the reason based on a set of procedures and policies.

Mike Shirley added that he has also sought council from state officials to make sure that any policies are acceptable by state standards and guidelines to back up Gail's findings.

Education and Communications Committee Report by Mike Timpane

Reporting on the SC/RC Conference Mike T said that by all accounts the conference went well. While all the numbers are not in, it appears that the Friends are in the black on the project.

Mike T, Chris, Janet, and Teri all worked on the project for the Friends benefit.

Mike S pointed out that the conference put approximately \$60,000 into the local economy. Mike S said that while the NERR staff is not enthusiastic about doing another project like this in the near future he is looking into projects like this one but nothing is planned at this time.

Mike T spoke about the bidding process and why it did not work in this case. The project was put out for bid for only 4 days resulting in a single bid (not from the Friends). The bid was well over budget which led to the voucher process used for the project.

The second item from the Education and Communications Committee is from the Education dept at the NERR. Angie presented an overview of the year for her department at the committee meeting. One of the requests to the Board is to give a NERR staff member access to the Friends website for quick updates on NERR activities and news.

The second concerning the Friends website is a request to use the Friends website as a hub for NERR information. This is a common practice among facilities such as this and their Friends groups. Mike S explained that there is a need to get information to the public in a timely manner and this is not possible on the state site. Changes to information on the state site can take several months to years to accomplish.

Irene was asked her opinion concerning allowing a staff member (the public information specialist) access to the site to make changes in pictures, events, and public information related updates.

Irene is the Board member that maintains the website.

Irene is not opposed to sharing access to the website with the NERR staff public information specialist. She expressed the need to meet with Diana, the current public information specialist about content, file type, procedure, etc.

Education cont.

There was a call for motions concerning allowing the NERR staff public information specialist access to the website to make changes to pictures, events, and public information related updates.

Peter motioned to allow the NERR staff public information specialist access to the site as described above.

Carl seconded, all in favor, none opposed.

There was not a vote about the second website request involving the Friends website being used as a hub.

Angie explained some of the new education programs to be offered at the NERR.

1) Statistics show that a visitor left alone will stay at the center for about 30 minutes. A visitor given a tour by a staff member will stay at the center for 2+ hours.

Personal tours of the facility are being developed and will be offered to visitors.

2) A researcher for a day program for adults is in development and will be offered. There may be a charge for the program wherein an adult will actively participate in research activities for a day.

3) A sustainable living program targeting developing communities bordering the reserve.

These programs are designed to create a sense of community with the adult population in the area.

The NERR may publish events in Folio weekly. Folio weekly allows the information to be changed weekly which has not been possible with some other publications the facility has used in the past.

A part time research translator will be added to the staff. The function of this position is to write down in layman's terms and distribute research data gathered at the NERR. The target of this information distribution is the general public in an attempt to help the general public understand another part of what is done at the NERR.

The Education department has:

\$5600 set aside for substitutes for the LIFE program for the spring semester.

\$4600 set aside for teacher workshops this summer.

The request to the Friends is that the Friends hold this money until it is needed for its designated purpose.

The process would be for the money to be held in the Friends accounts until it is needed and at that time the Friends would write the checks with the direction of Angie to the targeted projects and recipients.

Education cont.

The Education and Communications Committee recommends approval of this request. This request requires no additional funding by the Friends.

Irene motioned to approve the funds holding request.

Carl seconded, all approved, none opposed, the Friends will hold the funds as stated above.

Mike T said that the issue of grant money came up at the committee meeting. Mike has discovered that there is a lot of money available in grants right now and he feels that the Friends should look into applying for what they can.

Carl explained that grant money was one of the subjects discussed at the Executive Committee meeting. The discussion was about the NERR venturing into the grant programs with the Friends being the conduit to go after those grants. The recommendation of the Executive Committee is in favor of applying for a few small “pilot” grants to work out a process.

Triss motioned to approve the Executive Committee’s proposal for grants. Mike T seconded, all approved, none opposed, the Friends will apply for a few small grants and proceed as stated above.

Quarterly Report Feedback by Chris Rich

Chris reported on the Friends member feedback on the first quarterly report on spending sent via email to the Friends of the GTM Reserve membership in January.

There were 4 responses – 3 favorable the 4th asked to be removed from the mailing list. Tom Barry who raised the question of the report at the annual meeting responded favorably.

The quarterly reports will continue with little or no change to format.

Irene will post the report on the website.

EEC Closing / Repairs by Irene Kaufman

With the building closing and repairs approaching Irene asked Mike S how the Friends Board can help with the process and to aid in the continued public use of the open areas of the reserve.

Mike S reported that the bids came back over budget so the project is expected to go back out for bid this Friday.

The process is expected to go as follows:

30 days with pre bid meeting plus 2 weeks to pull the project together. The new expected start date is sometime in April.

There will be a concerted effort to keep part of the building open for employees throughout the repairs. There will be times that the building is closed to the public. As long as the building is open to employees it is expected that the Board can hold monthly Board meetings here.

EEC cont.

The staff has been working on ways to structure programs so they can continue during the repairs even when the building is closed to the public. This includes programs taking place outside.

The length of time the building will be closed to the public is not known. The completion date for the repairs is not known.

Mike T suggested a press release go out announcing the coming repairs and possible closure of the facility at times during the process.

Mike S asked that any press release be discussed internally before being released.

Other Business

Carl invited Commissioner Ken Bryan to speak.

Commissioner Bryan invited the Friends of the GTM Reserve to go to the County Board of Commissioners whenever there is relevant information to pass on.

One of the goals of the current Commission is to communicate better with the community and each other. One way of doing that is for the Commissioners to attend meetings of Boards in their areas, take notes, and pass the information on to the other commissioners. Commissioner Bryan will attend the Friends Board meetings on a regular basis as his schedule allows.

Carl thanked TC Specialties and Jonathan Katzen for their donation of services in the amount of a couple thousand dollars for the annual fund raiser and the first quarter renewals.

Linda Harrison asked if all the Board members have filled out their volunteer applications. She stressed the importance of getting these done and handed in.

Pierre adjourned the meeting at 5:55 pm

Peter motioned to adjourn

Chris seconded all approved none opposed, meeting adjourned

The next Friends of the GTM Reserve Board meeting will be March 10, 2009