

MINGO SWAMP FRIENDS MEETING

April 14, 2015

The April meeting was called to order at 6:36 pm by President, Sharon Tuschhoff. The meeting was attended by 4 members: Sharon Tuschhoff, Brad Watkins, Gary Beacham, Amanda Mossman and one Refuge Staff, Lindsey Landowski. Neither the secretary's report nor the treasurer's report were voted on for approval due to lack of attendance; they will be presented again at the next meeting for approval. Any decisions needed voting on will be sent out via email.

Secretary's Report: Copies of the minutes from the January meeting were mailed both by hard copy and via email by Bruce Beck. Sharon, gave a brief review of the minutes, with one correction needed: the amount of the grant is \$2000 not \$5000 as reported under old business.

Treasurer's Report: was given by Gary Beacham. The ending balance is \$13142.49. The balance for the photo club is \$385.15.

Old Business:

- 1) **Bookstore Committee:** No report due to absence of committee members. There were 2 bills waiting in mailbox that were given to Gary for payment.
- 2) **Friends Website:** Bruce had reported via email that the Friend's website is out of date; Brad and Lindsey will work together to get that updated.

Staff Updates:

- 1) **Eagle Days:** Lindsey reported that there were about 700 students who came through on Friday but was unsure of the numbers for Saturday. The last two rotations for the Eagle presentation were filled to capacity and the eagles were very active out on the Refuge both days so there were several sightings, including seeing one eagle take down a duck. The Friends group had already voted to pay \$1000 towards the expenses - \$500 was designated by grant money and the other \$500 was from cash reserves. Peter had emailed Sharon- there was a remaining \$100 balance left over; everyone voted via email to cover that remaining expense also. Gary was going to check with Peter to see if that has been paid.
- 2) **Family Fishing Day:** is scheduled at for June 6th and will be held at Fox pond. Last year the Friends group paid for the bait, etc and we also had a hotdog/soda stand. This year the tackle/rod & reels/ bait will be paid for out the grant funds. Sharon has already purchased 4 rod/reels; Brad is going to check with local businesses about buying more equipment and also bait. We will need to verify with Peter how much bait is needed. Also, Lindsey asked if we would be willing to supply a porta-potty since there is none available. Brad is going to check on cost of rental and Lindsey is going to check with a company the Refuge has used for other events. We will need to decide as a group if we want to purchase any door prizes, etc. and if we want to have the hotdog stand again. Lindsey also suggested having bottled water on hand. Last year we had voted to purchase canopies and that purchase was never made. Sharon will verify with Bruce regarding how much the group had set aside for the canopies and we will try to make that purchase before Family Fishing Day. Gary said that WalMart has some quality canopies for around \$100 and we might be able to purchase more than one.
- 3) **Summer help-stipend:** Lindsey had emailed Sharon a few weeks ago with questions regarding paying a living stipend for a summer volunteer/intern if the Refuge provided a place to live. person would work so many hour a week for the Refuge and then volunteer so many hours a week in the

bookstore and helping with other events, such as Swamp Saturday etc. Other Friends groups have paid as much as \$100/week; however, if an intern/volunteer is paid more than \$500, they are not eligible to be covered by Fish & Wildlife insurance. Lindsey wanted to know if our insurance would cover such a situation. Sharon contacted our agent: the concern with this was that it would too hard to differentiate between when this person was acting as volunteer and when they were actually working for the Refuge. For instance, if they were injured while helping with a Friends event, insurance would cover. But if they were out cutting down trees for the Refuge and were injured, then that could wipe out our \$10,000 coverage. His suggestions was not to provide coverage, which is the recommendation that Sharon passed on to both the Refuge and the group. There was more discussion at the meeting: 1) we can decide to pay any amount for this person-- \$500 for the whole summer and that would be it. 2) They would have to have designated days that they were volunteering in the bookstore and the guidelines would have to be rigid about maintaining those days 3) if an injury occurred, there would have to be detailed documentation of that injury 4) there is a need to have more coverage in the bookstore; right now we have 1 volunteer working 1 day a week. Refuge staff are not allowed to run the bookstore for us, make purchases for supplies or take money from visitors making purchases in the bookstore. 5) Those of us who were at the meeting had conflicting feelings about paying the stipend—can we afford to carry this expense in future years, what about the volunteers that are “working” now and not getting paid but at the same time, what if we pay someone this year and our enrollment in the Friends group increases in the future and we have more manpower to help in the bookstore? We are also running short on time; most interns have already found positions and we would like to see someone from SEMO or Three Rivers in this position. The Refuge staff is willing to start looking for someone but does not want to do the work if we are not willing to pay a stipend. It was decided that Sharon would send out a mass email, with a required response by April 20th. If there is not majority approval then we will not move forward with this idea. Also, there was a suggestion that perhaps we could offer to pay mileage to the person who is already volunteering and perhaps she could increase her hours. Gary also questioned about taxes; our group would have to generate a 1099 and we are not sure we can do this as a non-profit. Sharon will contact a CPA to find the answer to that, send out the first email for voting then send out a second email with the results. Members are the only ones allowed to vote on this decision.

4) Other Staff Updates: The auto tour is still only partially opened due to high waters. There have been a lot of school groups coming to the Refuge on Fridays; there are about 500 students scheduled to visit for this Spring. Bruce, Pat Holloway, Katelyn and Nicole have been tremendous help with those tours. The next Thursday public meeting will be April 23rd at 6pm and will be about wildflowers. There is a Paddle Boat ride scheduled for May 2nd. There have been 70 wild hogs trapped on the Refuge since Jan. 16th.

5) Lindsey announced that she has taken the position of Refuge Manager at Squaw Creek and will be leaving at the end of May. We wish her and her family luck but we will miss her and her enthusiasm for our Refuge. THANK YOU FOR ALL YOU HAVE DONE AT MINGO!!!

With all business concluded, the meeting adjourned at 7:35 pm.

The next meeting is scheduled for July 14th at 6:30pm. As a reminder, this is our annual meeting and will need to nominate officers for the upcoming year.

Respectfully submitted,

Sharon Tuschhoff