

Friends of Goodwin Forest

Meeting Minutes of January 22, 2024 in person and on Google Meeting

Present: in person: President Lynne Warren, Vice President Lynn Kochiss, Treasurer Bruce Spaman, Secretary Linda Wenner, Jim Giana, Bill Marshall, Glen Newcombe, Stan Crawford, Steve Broderick, Dale May, Kate May.

The meeting was called to order by Lynne at 1:00 PM. Lynne said the Goodwin deed says the endowment was given to cover costs of grounds maintenance and salary of an education director. Also Lori Brant has hired Adam as naturalist. We hope this means he will be able to open the building for programs.

Jim brought up an issue with donations. One member gave dues and a sizable donation. CFPA's financial report does not reflect if that money went to us. Jim gave a letter to Lynne and she will investigate when she sits down with new CFPA staff. She has emailed them for a date but has not gotten a response yet.

Lynn K pointed out the importance of logging our volunteer hours on the CFPA website. Both she and Lynne W had over 400 hours each in 2023. This highlights our importance to CFPA and DEEP. Each volunteer hour is worth \$30.61. Lynne W said she will emphasize the importance of a full-time educator at Goodwin. We had that back in 2007 and need to restore that level of support. There was a question about the Windham School grant – will that money be lost or not renewed if Goodwin remains shut down like it is now? We are unsure if the Windham Schools have been notified that there may be no spring semester programs.

Steve talked about how the building was finally re-sided. He said Senator Champagne called DEEP every two weeks until it got moved to the priority list and was done. Lynne will ask if we can rent the building for our programs. Steve said he talked to Representative Pat Boyd last week and Pat agreed that we need a full-time director at Goodwin. Perhaps a meeting with Lori and Chris will help? Since the endowment goes toward a director's salary, the cost to DEEP would be \$37,000 less. Steve said at one time he got a copy of the bank's report of the endowment and we should still get that. (At that time the bank was Connecticut Bank and Trust, which has since been merged several times into other banks.) Jim mentioned that there are options for investment of our money held by CFPA. Dale remembers a committee meeting with a bank on investment options. Steve felt we should let CFPA take care of the investments and put our energy into the hiring of the full-time director. We need to get Sen. Gordon and Rep. Boyd on board this summer to get funding in place for next year. Educators have taken a funding back seat to the need for maintainers. Dale said in the court of public opinion, the way the State has mis-handled Mr. Goodwin's donation of 2000 acres and buildings and endowment has been shameful. Lynne said as far as the Urban Forestry Initiative, that Goodwin would be perfect for that with plant propagation and especially the current focus on native plants. Bruce pointed out that northeast Connecticut is "the lungs of Connecticut" just as the Amazon is the "lungs of the world." Bruce said the focus should be on establishing forests (most are 10 acres or less) instead of planting a few trees in urban areas. We have a lot of big forests in our area. Glen asked where the income goes from the logging done at Goodwin. It probably goes into DEEP's pocket. It has been proven that hiring more foresters would pay for their salaries plus a surplus.

Lynne investigated the new office of Industry and Outdoor Experiences. They are basically tasked with what we are already doing. She said no Friends of State Parks Day will be held at the Capitol this year. Apparently, the folks at the Capitol like their concourse empty.

Lynne will contact Lori about how we can best support her efforts to get full-time staff at Goodwin. Beth Bernard needs to take the Forestry Exam before she does field work, but then we can advocate for her office base to be at Goodwin.

Lynn K gave a synopsis of how CFPA's focus has shifted away from education for kids and families to land owners only. She hopes the new executive director, with his background in education, will refocus CFPA on education. Steve reminded us that Eric Hammerling is now at DEEP and may help bridging the gap between the energy and the environment sides. He could be an advocate for education. Stan mentioned that the DOT is refurbishing the Airline Trail from Windham to Pomfret. Work is underway.

Membership: Lynn K got the documents from Jim. Numbers from CFPA did not match. For 2023 we had 133 paid members – 108 dual with CFPA and 33 just Friends of Goodwin. The new office manager at CFPA is energetic and excited to get started straightening things out. She has a Zoom meeting set up for 2/6 with a committee at CFPA to discuss what we need for information and how to get to it. We need a list of past members so we can ask them to rejoin and an actual list of 2023 membership. CFPA does not send out their late renewal reminder until March. A large \$4000 donation was received from one of our members but did it go to CFPA or us? Jim said we don't have a mechanism for accounting for donations. CFPA only reports membership. They use Quick Books and perhaps data was lost in the transfer to Excel. Megan at CFPA is coming on board to generate the reports we need. Bruce said he also needs clarity in the reports he receives. He has questions on how money is processed. There are many sources – membership, program fees, donations, payroll donations. Income reports are confusing since these different sources are not tracked. Lynn suggested Bruce join the 2/6 meeting.

Treasurer's Report: Bruce sent an inquiry to CFPA about financial irregularities but has not heard back. Our year end balance was \$47,881. The account is with Liberty Bank but CFPA manages the money. Stan said the town invests their surplus at 5%. Motion to accept the 2024 Budget by Lynne, second by Stan and Jim, accepted. Bruce will send the Budget to Beth B for CFPA.

Programs: Lynne said she and Beth Morrow decided the next Master Naturalist cohort will begin in July. Jim suggested holding programs at Town Hall if needed. Stan said the capacity of the room downstairs is 130, the community center holds 60 and the elementary school auditorium 250. We could design a Hampton specific program. Stan has a key for town hall and has the Hampton first selectman on board and the Chaplin first selectman is also supportive. Kate was concerned that that might show DEEP that we really don't need access to the Goodwin buildings.

Stan said the trail crew needs access to the Goodwin garage for our tools and materials to repair the R/W trail, which is underwater now. He is concerned about getting it ready for the Trail Run. Bill sent the information on dates needed for the Trail Run to Lori and is awaiting confirmation that staffing will be available to open the building. All staging and preparations are made using the building. February 1 starts open registration. Some runners camp overnight. It was pointed out that Boy Scouts and CCC use the campground as well. We hope the PSA position is filled ASAP so our summer programs are not impacted. We feel strongly about Forestry Day as it is also a 60th anniversary celebration of Mr. Goodwin's deed sign-over. Lynn K said she took 150 books donated for the Little Free Library home until we have building access again.

Stan made a motion to adjourn, seconded by Steve, adjourned.

Next meeting date and place to be determined.

Respectfully submitted by Linda Wenner.

