

## Friends of Goodwin Forest

### Meeting Minutes of March 14, 2023 on Zoom

**Present:** President Jim Giana, Treasurer Bruce Spaman, Bill Marshall, Steve Broderick, Gabe Zorabedian, Recording Secretary Linda Wenner, Beth Bernard, Eric Hammerling, Robert Mazzawy, Lynne Warren, Emily Logee-Savoie, Marcia Kilpatrick.

The meeting was called to order by Jim at 6:08 PM. The minutes of January 24, 2023 were accepted unanimously.

Jim reported that he had purchased the \$100 retirement gift for Terri Peters from the Friends. Motion to accept by Bruce, seconded by Steve, accepted unanimously.

**Treasurer's Report:** Bruce reported the new book keeper is doing a good job. Lynne commented that the website was renewed for \$473 and a new laptop purchased for Friends access to our website for \$459. Recently a bill for \$2000 for last year's Master Naturalist program came in for last year's budget. Some trail run money is already coming in along with some membership money. The plant sale is at zero in the budget. Bill questioned the Naturalist expenditure under Code 200 for \$1419 for Elizabeth Merrow. That item should go under the Master Naturalist Code 205. Trails have \$1200 available for this year's improvements. Motion to accept the Treasurer's report by Bill, seconded by Beth, so moved and accepted unanimously.

**Membership Report:** Jim said we have 104 Friends only members and 137 dual members for 241 total. Of that number 28 Friends only are paid up and 88 dual members are paid. (116 paid and 125 unpaid.) Lynne said the newsletter used to remind folks about renewal time. Jim will check to see if a letter will be going out soon to remind people. Lynne thinks it would be possible to add a tag with the joining date to our Excel spreadsheet of members. Eric noted that when people lapse for a year or so it makes it difficult for CFPA to track renewal dates. Steve will look up what was used for reminders in the past. Motion to accept the report by Lynne, seconded by Steve, accepted unanimously.

**Social Media:** Lynne reported that the website is now renewed to 2025. Lots of visits (over 2000 unique visitors) to the website as soon as she posted the trail run and master naturalist announcements. Other interest was in the blog post on Monarchs, the current programs and gardens. Referring sites are Google, Blue Blazed Trail Running Series, Facebook and Webscorer. MailChimp has no rejected emails, 50% of notices (both original and reminder) were opened and about 15% clicked on links. On Facebook the Master Naturalist Program reached 850 people with 90 shares, Trail Run reached about 6,000 people with 350 shares and Garden Volunteers reached over 7,000 with 450 shares. Instagram is showing slow growth. Lynne suggested Insta-share stations at Goodwin at some iconic spots would encourage people to post their photos and tag us. The Twitter account has been deleted. Reaching people on Facebook and Instagram will remain the focus. Mastodon and Reddit have potential but Lynne is currently using her private account to share Goodwin events. Jim said he has found the webpage difficult for people his age to navigate. Motion to accept report by Bruce, seconded by Bill, accepted unanimously.

**Trail Run:** Bill reported lots of interest with registrations off to a great start with 42 to date. The 30 K Run registrations are also up. 11 T-shirts have been sold, they are lime green/yellow with the logo. Two new things – a workday is planned for April to put the Trophy Logs together and a May 6<sup>th</sup> (weather date May 7<sup>th</sup>) at 9 AM practice run meets at the Pavilion. Bandannas will be ordered, beige and green were the

winning colors. The start times have been changed with the 30K at 9 AM and the 10K at 9:30 AM. Motion to accept report by Bruce, second by Bill, accepted unanimously.

**Garden Report:** Lynne said she and Kim Kelly propose to have a volunteer crew take charge of the gardens, much like the trail crew operates. Since staff has changed the gardens have gotten off track so this year the priorities are assessment and inventory and eliminating invasives. The intent is to have an updated design created through partnerships (much like the landscape architecture class did for our facilities) that will reflect current research, ecosystem equity and best management practices. A seasonal maintainer can be trained by the volunteers to do the tasks necessary to keep the grounds in top shape. The idea is to send progress reports to Lori and Matt as we go so that everyone is on the same page (unless the state can find a wildlife/horticulture specialist who can teach and maintain the grounds for minimum wage). We had our first orientation on Sunday, March 12<sup>th</sup> with about 15 attendees. Several veterans are returning and 9 immediately committed. Another orientation will be offered in May with a date to be determined. Lynne is organizing walks to show volunteers plant communities. Due to invasive jumping worms, we will not be using wood chips in the gardens as it encourages exponential spread. We will be trying to find funds to create a universal access trail (the cost will be about \$4000 using data from the project to create a UAT from the driveway to the gazebo) through the gardens. We could apply for a RPT grant by March 2024 to fund new paths once the plan is ready. Bill will send Lynne the information from the last grant received. There will be an April 8<sup>th</sup> hike for volunteer gardeners to clip invasives but it will mostly be a team building activity. Bill would like to join the group in fighting invasives. The cut and cover strategy for killing invasives relies on timing – should be done when the plant is fully leafed out and the canopy provides shade so May is the best time. Once the plant is cut back the roots are covered to starve the plant of energy. There is interest in having a plant sale. We will use what we have in the propagation beds but buy potting soil so we don't inadvertently send worms home with people. Motion to accept the report by Bill, seconded by Steve, and unanimously accepted.

**CFPA:** Eric said Friends of CT State Parks Day is March 29<sup>th</sup> at the Capitol. The Friends should have a table or share one (there is a limit of 10 tables with 2 chairs each). Bill, Bruce and Linda are willing to attend. The Passport program remains intact. The State's proposal is for **one** new park employee – a district position which would supervise park supervisors for one-third of the state. 120 field positions have been lost since the 1980's with park attendance now at an all-time high with 17 MILLION visits. No park should have only 1 maintainer! One Maintainer for 10 parks, 3 forests, 3 campgrounds, 13 boat launches and 13 historic sites. Friends Day at the Capitol is our chance to talk to legislators about funding more positions such as 15 new park maintainers. Senator Jeff Gordon is chair of Appropriations and is the Senator for Goodwin. Linda will email Jeff and ask him to attend. Steve mentioned that we have our nice display to bring there. No animals are allowed – alive or stuffed! Steve moved to accept the report, seconded by Bill, accepted unanimously. Jim asked Eric if the Friends need their own insurance for items stored at Goodwin (tractor, laptop, display) or if CFPA would add it to their policy. Eric will look into doing that.

**Director's Report:** Beth said the Master Naturalist program starts April 22 with a full group plus a wait list. People are excited about the changes and a field trip to Elizabeth Park for birding, etc. Adam has planned hikes, a program on "bug hotels," geology program on clay. Windham Middle School is coming on Mondays and Fridays in May for 8 trips. There will be outreach at WMS in April for prep and in June for follow-up. Windham Center 2<sup>nd</sup> grade is coming on the Friends sponsored bus. 20 Windham Middle

School students are coming for a "Write the Land" program for the other bus sponsorship. Goodwin will be mentioned in the publication that results from the program. Beth thanked Lynne for leading and great volunteer orientation for gardeners the past weekend. Beth also gave thanks to Bruce for streamlining the financial process. Motion to accept the report by Bruce, seconded by Bill, accepted unanimously.

**Trails:** Gabe said activity is quiet right now with some small windfalls taken care of with Glen Newcombe. A classic "widowmaker" was found on the Blue trail north of Nutmeg Lane. Matt Quinn was notified but so far it has not been addressed so Gabe did a work-around. Beaver debris clogged the Brown Hill Marsh drain and a crew was right out to unclog it but it has since recurred with the Yellow trail under 2 to 3 inches of water. Bob said there is a work-around on the Yellow trail for when flooding occurs but it is not maintained. Bob had contacted DEEP about printing the kiosk maps and they said they have someone who can print them. Gabe is going to follow up to see what the hold up is there. Bob had reached out to Alex Bradley at CFPA about the summer trail crew staining the kiosks but has had no reply so Gabe will follow up. Spring trail work is planned on both seasonal and non-seasonal muddy areas. Dave Raczkowski pointed out that the Blue trail at Bear Hill near Black Spruce Pond is wet and gets very wet for a major portion of the year. This is a DEEP access road from Canon Rd to Black Spruce Pond so Gabe will follow up with DEEP to ask that they consider working on this section. There is an area of the Blue trail on the north side of 11<sup>th</sup> Section Road that is mud most of the year and will require crushed stone. Also the Yellow trail around Brown Hill Marsh is wet throughout the year and will be a priority for angular stone/gravel to build elevation. Bob thanked Gabe for "hitting the trails running." Gabe commented that he had observed that Goodwin's trails are remarkably trash free. Bill made the motion to accept the report, seconded by Bob, and accepted unanimously.

**5 Year Plan:** Lynne said she had posted the 5 Year Plan on the minutes page. The number one goal is a full time staffer to represent the face of Goodwin and do programs. The WiFi connection is spotty there plus a guest password for public access is needed. We need open houses to inspire volunteers and memberships. We need a Newsletter with lots of pictures, history, trivia, a director's letter, a president's letter, trail and garden reports. Guest lecturers would draw in the public. There is a problem with the rule that the building can't be used unless DEEP staff is present. Beth said Lori and Matt are supportive of getting staffing at Goodwin. Matt is willing to supervise a Maintainer but the position hasn't even been posted yet. DEEP moves slowly, especially in tech support. Steve spoke to State Forester Chris Martin and he has money to hire a state forestry educator and Goodwin would be the perfect location for such a person. Steve made the motion to accept the report, seconded by Bill and accepted unanimously.

**Socializing Events:** Steve said a dozen people have offered to help with May 19<sup>th</sup> FOG open house. We have the plan and need a notice to go out to the list serve to save the date. Ramona Goode from DEEP is willing to talk about the dam reconstruction. Beth is willing to say a few words as well. Jeff Gordon and Pat Boyd will be invited as well as the first selectmen of Hampton and Chaplin. Bruce made the motion to accept the report, seconded by Bill, and accepted unanimously.

**Other Business:** Jim reported that he sent two letters of testimony supporting the bill on funding trails and also on funding the general budget. He pointed out that Matt covers 21,000 acres with 21 wildlife management areas. He also noted the ridiculousness of the low pay scale for maintainers and naturalists. Beth commented that staffing has not reflected the growth in visitation.

We will consider alternating day and evening meetings.

Motion to adjourn by Steve, second by Bruce and the meeting adjourned at 8:00 PM.

**Next meeting is May 9, 2023, at 1 PM at Goodwin and hybrid on Zoom.**

Respectfully submitted by Linda Wenner.