

Friends of Goodwin Forest

November 8, 2022

Present: Jim Giana, Bruce Spaman, Bill Marshall, Lynne Warren, Steve Broderick, Elizabeth Merow, Eoin Horning-Kane, Lynn Kochiss, Stan Crawford, Robert Mazzawy, Linda Wenner, Beth Bernard, Eric Hammerling, Lori Brant.

The meeting was called to order by Jim at 1:05 PM. The minutes of September 13, 2022 were accepted unanimously.

Treasurer's Report: Bruce reported that our finances look good, but more expenses will be paid out in the next two months with little income left to come in. For next year's budget cost savings may be realized by consolidating the Master Naturalist I and II programs, as other similar groups do with their programs. There also may be savings in the Maintainer position going forward due to changes in that position. Stan mentioned an additional \$500 donation came in for trails. Robert said a grant of \$250 was also received for trails which was used for materials for two bridges and water seal for existing benches. Plant sales and the trail run raised more than budgeted. The Treasurer's Report was accepted unanimously.

Membership Report: Jim reported a current total of 241 members with 135 dual members and 106 just Goodwin Friends. That is one new member since the last meeting. Many more are on our membership list but it doesn't cost us anything to keep them informed and they may choose to contribute in the future. Some donate but aren't members. Many know us from Zoom programs, etc. Stan suggested having an early workday, then a membership meeting followed by a potluck dinner to attract more people to the meetings. The membership report was accepted unanimously.

Social Media: Lynne reported that we are still picking up new people liking us and following our page. Twitter seems to be dead so she is exploring using Mastodon instead. Survey top three answers: hikes, flower ID and tree ID for things they like. Best times for meeting: no consensus as to time, in person or Zoom. Several said they are too far away to attend a meeting. The social media report was accepted unanimously.

Garden: no report.

CFPA: Eric said he would like a Zoom meeting option as it is a long commute for him. CFPA does receive support from DEEP for the programs and staff here at Goodwin. He thanked those who attended the CFPA Volunteer Dinner – about 110 to 115 attended. Strategic Plan 2023 – 2025 is currently being worked on so our input would be respected and valued by January for March board approval. The new auditor this year is concerned about fiscal sponsorships but it shouldn't affect support for Goodwin. Terri Peters is retiring at year's end and the office manager position has been posted. DEEP needs more people and positions have been posted. 83 people to be hired. Although we need full-time positions at Goodwin, it is unlikely that DEEP will make that decision. We really would need to go back to 200 parks positions as it was several years ago. 83 people for 110 parks? Our testimony is needed at budget hearings! CFPA report was accepted unanimously.

DEEP: Matt Quinn was not available to give a report. The dam construction is complete and siding work on the building is started. Stan asked if the dam was over schedule by 12 months and how much over budget it ran, but no one knew the answers. The Friends would still like to have an Education Center built here and would like to keep that on the "wish list." The Friends of Hammonasset and Friends of

Sleeping Giant both worked with DEEP to build their Education Centers so a precedent is set. Several years ago a preliminary plan was worked on that included a carbon neutral, energy efficient design with solar, class room areas, etc. A 10 year physical plan was designed with help from UConn Architectural students about 10 years ago. Getting on the DEEP capital improvement plan would be difficult as the current one is already miles long. We are losing kids because we are technologically deficient! We thank CFPA for their support.

Lori said Matt is responsible for 23,000 acres now and so she will be coming to our meetings. She would also like a Zoom option because of the long commute. She asked for clarification on the work of DEEP's seasonal employees – for example DEEP employees can not work on the plant sale, but can work on the landscape. Robert noted the urgent need for new maps at the kiosks as the current ones are faded and lack a “you are here” arrow. Lori is having trouble getting them printed and will ask for DAS help. **This is a safety issue for park users!** The Education and Outreach Unit will be establishing a Storywalk Trail at Goodwin with semi-permanent signage that can be switched out at least seasonally. They will utilize QR codes for low-vision and multilingual families. This is under the “No Child Left Inside” initiative. There was a suggestion for a children’s poetry trail as well.

Personnel change: Sue Quincy is now working at Goodwin. The SCORP (Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Program) is now being updated. Eric said the plan includes municipal recreation and recreationalists (like us!). An example of needs that SCORP identifies is the need for more pickleball courts nationally. Education is under State Parks. Stan mentioned that the Connecticut Horse Council’s Volunteer Horse Patrol logs data on daily activity in state parks and forests including the number of people and what activity they are doing in the park/forest. Jim said Manchester used plastic signs with an embossed QR code (not printed) on trails and the signs have held up for years and the kids liked it. The report was accepted unanimously.

Director’s Report: Beth reported that the Master Naturalist Program just wrapped up. CFPA sponsored Elizabeth as the data manager for the program. Today is the last day for Eoin and he has done a great job here. He established great relationships with all the area librarians. Eoin recapped his work at Goodwin – 56 events held of which he did 32, 11 with kids and 21 of all ages. He also built a bat house which needs to be hung. The build a bat house event didn’t happen because the northeast requires 4 chambers in the house. He showed us the house, which was quite large and heavy. This was not something kids could easily do. He updated the kids’ Discovery Trail, adding tactile and interesting looking plants, pulled out invasives and added a letterbox. He did several bat-themed presentations and handed out Goodwin information at those held off site. He mentioned that leaf-peepers requested a scenic overlook be established. Beth will address that with the state forester. Eoin thanked the Friends for all their support, especially Lynne and Beth for all the ideas and resources. The report was accepted unanimously.

Physical Plant: no report.

Trails: Robert said lots of logging has been done which lets light in and causes much more growth of brush and briers. Effort has been put in to remove this out to Governor’s Island. Also 2 new bridges were added over the stream area which is a return for the 10K Run. Water sealer is being applied to benches and overlooks. Robert cleaned signs with Simple Green and elbow grease and they cleaned up nicely. Painted blazes have been replaced with plastic blazes by Cain. Thanks to the great work done by the Trails Crew. Visitors have mentioned the stellar condition of the trails in comparison to other parks they visited. Many compliments have been given. The report was accepted unanimously.

Staffing: for now things are on hold until needs become clearer. The Friends can support staff by writing to legislators to request more staff funding. Our support of the Passport Program was successful using this method.

5 Year Plan: Lynne expressed interest on working on that. Issues that need attention include: ByLaws revision, new trails, gift shop plans, boat house construction, education plan, education building, diversity (age, race, backgrounds, income). Beth mentioned the importance of thinking outside the box as to projects and fundraisers, big picture ideas.

Other Business

Budget planning: Bruce highlighted changes that may happen such as staff, increasing the trail funding.

Fundraising Considerations: Lori reiterated that DEEP seasonals can't handle money for the Friends Plant Sale, can't dig plants or put them out for sale. Beth said she collects the funds from the self-service money box. DEEP staff has never handled money from the sale. Jim said a letter he received mentioned that the donation was for the plants purchased at the plant sale because when she wanted to pay, Warren wouldn't accept the money and just pointed to the self-serve money box. Several education programs focus on the native plants grown here. Eric mentioned other Friends groups have been creative with fundraising. Robert mentioned the value of collaboration with the Friends and DEEP such as the repair/replacement of the basement doors and steps. This saved DEEP \$90,000.00!

Socializing Events: Bill said we should have a get-together since we haven't had one in a long time. Steve said it did attract new members and volunteers. Lynne suggested that January and February are good times to plan those events as people are looking for something to do. A committee is needed to plan a party – Solstice and Valentines Day were suggested as themes. Bruce suggested a Celebration of Forestry event and Eric and the state forester were supportive. Equipment could be brought in to entice kids (like touch-a-truck events). Next fall after the fairs are done would be an ideal time. "Eastern Connecticut – This is Where Forestry Happens" could be a tag line for the event. Would not be a fundraiser but a "Friend-raiser." There could be a portable sawmill station to cut "tree cookies," a chain saw safety station, a fire fighting crew station, etc. Beth said she supports this idea 100%. This fits with the Great Park Pursuit. Could fit in with DEEP's plan for a Forestry Day. We should be the location for that event! We could reach out to high school guidance counselors for career day. Unanimous support for Forestry Day from the attendees!

Master Naturalist update: Beth said they are never short on participants but feedback is that they need more time to complete their research projects. Half or less go on to Level II. Most participants (85%) were under 45 years old and there were only 2 retirees. 24 participants for Level I and 12 for Level II. Proposal for 2023 is combining the sections to offer a 12 month class with one meeting a month. Fee would increase to \$315 (from \$275). This would be 84 hours of learning over a year. (Compared to similar group's program of 44 hours for the same price of \$315.) Another option is using a centralized location with expanded facilities. Or field trips could be held at various locations to visit the different habitats around the state. Required class time could be viewed on line ahead of field trips. Scholarships would stay at a cost of \$75 to participants.

Foresters Yankee chapter is having their meeting here at Goodwin on November 16th.

Meeting adjourned at 3:20 PM.

Next meeting is January 10, 2023 at 1 PM.

Respectfully submitted by Linda Wenner.