

MINUTES

**GRAHAM CREEK NATURE PRESERVE ADVISORY BOARD
407 E. LAUREL AVENUE
FOLEY, ALABAMA
CONFERENCE ROOM
JULY 2, 2015
5:30 P.M.**

MEETING

Call to Order/Roll Call

Chairman Zana Price called the Graham Creek Nature Preserve Advisory Board meeting to order at 5:35 p.m. Those members present: Tommy Patterson, Homer Singleton, and Tim Closson. Absent: Phillip Hinesley, Greg Knight, and Chad Watkins. Others present: Leslie Gahagan and Vickey Southern.

MINUTES

Approve Minutes of June 4, 2015

Mr. Patterson made a motion to approve the minutes of June 4, 2015 and Mr. Singleton seconded the motion. The vote passed unanimously.

GUESTS

Friends of Graham Creek

None of the Friends of Graham Creek showed up at the meeting; however, Mrs. Gahagan reported she spoke with Donna Turbyfill. The Friends have received donations (one donation was from the Foley Women's Club) and have some seed money they requested a wish list from staff. Ms. Trimble organized a wish list of educational supplies, which included: (1) a number of books to use on Explore and Observe Days; (2) new awning fabric, which was used as a hammock; and (3) marimbas and other small musical items. At first they thought that they might receive one or two of the items on the list but found out that they purchased all the items.

Mrs. Gahagan reported before the diorama is done in the new building, she would like to take some temporary shelving and place the books in front so the children will have a reading corner. All the books are nature themed and they have found some books on the local area, for example a three book series entitled "The Mullet" is about a mullet that lives its life. The books have been very well received.

After The Friends purchased all the items on the list they purchased some picnic tables. One of the tables was located by the disc golf course's starting point, another by the archery range and then one at the outdoor classroom. Upon the request of The Friends, a long term list with high dollar items was provided as

follows: 1) one art panel made of plexi-glass that the children can paint on and then be washed off, either by staff or the rain; 2) one sand table; 3) one water table.

Mrs. Gahagan received information today on a five piece drum set in both adult and children sizes made from a composite material. They are very heavy and can be left outside without worrying that the drums will walk off. She also has some cedar rain sticks ordered.

Chairman Price reported she has some children's books for the library that she will be happy to donate.

NEW BUSINESS

Adult workshop on birding and plants in July

Mrs. Gahagan reported Samantha is here on an internship from Huntsville and one of her requirements is to put on two adult education classes. A novice birding class will be held at Graham Creek Nature Preserve on July 23, 2015 from 8:00 – 10:00 a.m. Included in the class is a mini photo guide book of commonly seen birds in the preserve with the bird's information. The two hour event will include some of the better birding sites and will be advertised with the Coastal Foundation, who is their subcontractor. Sam has also talked with the Coastal Wildlife Rescue Center to come over with some of their birds. They did very well with some of the camps on what to do if you find an injured bird and other items. The birds have a 60% chance of survival and the ladies are phenomenal.

Mr. Singleton reported that he gave a presentation to the Sierra Club last month and he was impressed. Mrs. Gahagan reported they do a great job with little to no funding.

Mrs. Gahagan reported Sam will also have a plant identification walk on July 24, 2015 from 8:00 – 10:00 a.m. This walk is approximately two miles where students will see plants that are in bloom and learn about their culinary, historical and medicinal benefits. The handbook that Sam has developed features photos of what you will find blooming in July, such as St. John's Wart, Red Bay, Meadow Beauties (taste like a lemon zest), colic root, etc.

Puppets

Mrs. Gahagan reported she was approached by a retired couple originally from the Midwest and is now living in Leisure Lakes that would like to do four puppet shows during the Explore and Observe Days. Mrs. Gahagan will give them the theme for Explore and Observe Day and they will write their own skit to match the theme. She is very excited about having a new set of volunteers at the GCNP. They also have the "Sassafras Ladies" that sing. The little kids love them and their "ABC's of nature" song. It will be a good community effort.

International Mud Day

Mrs. Gahagan reported International Mud Day was done at the last minute and both children and adults had a great time playing in the mud. Ms. Trimble shoveled black dirt out of the mud pits for the races, put it on a tarp and sprinkled it down with water. Everyone was slipping and sliding in the mud and having mud ball fights, and making mud pies at the outdoor classroom. It was very well received and staff has been asked to have another mud day a couple of times a year. They are thinking about getting some swimming pools so that Ms. Trimble won't have to dig and move a lot around from one place to another. It was nice not having to worry about having a snake come up.

Chairman Price reported her husband's sister's grandchildren had a mud birthday party. The children ages 4-5 years old and 10-11 had the best time. They go to bowling alley and spend \$120 to play laser tag and the Preserve could have a birthday party for a couple of hours just playing with mud.

Projects for 2016

1) *Philomene Holmes Blvd. Construction*

Mrs. Gahagan reported she has turned in her portion of the budget and she wanted the Board to know what she put in the FY16 budget. There are not many projects because the Center will be under construction (pre-construction meeting is one day next week). The City is finishing up a project on the Foley Beach Express where the headwall collapsed and when they finish that project staff will begin on the Philomene Holmes Blvd. They will begin at the Wolf Bay Drive area but not connect it to Wolf Bay Drive yet so that the road boundaries will be in place. They wanted the road delineated before beginning work on the Center. Once that is set in motion, they will begin on the opposite side of Philomene Holmes and move back to leave it open where the creek crossing is until they complete both approaches. Mrs. Gahagan is in the process of permitting.

2) *ADCNR Coastal Access Grant – ADA Trail*

At the last meeting Mr. Hinesley announced that the City received the \$100,000 50/50 match ADCNR Coastal Access Grant for construction for a third of a mile walking trail by the memorial tree grove. The entrance will be built up, rubberized mulch will be added to the ground, and at the forested tree line a matted boardwalk will be constructed over the stream with a loop to return to the tree grove. It will be ADA and elderly accessible and scooter, walker and wheelchair friendly. This is one of the items in the highest order in the Master Plan.

- 3) *Pavilion*
Mrs. Gahagan has requested a small pavilion to go next to the outdoor classroom at a cost of approximately \$25,000. It will be similar to what you see in the City Parks and just big enough for two picnic tables to host a family picnic.
- 4) *Maintenance Area Enhancements*
 - A) A power box has been included so that fans can be plugged in;
 - B) The roof is rusting and the roof needs to be extended over the metal power box; and
 - C) Construction of a small bay on the other side where they are storing wood to store the zero turn mower.
- 5) *Split Rail Fencing*
Split rail fencing estimated at \$20,000 to be placed at the new entrance from the curve of Wolf Bay Drive at Bobby Faust's fence and do the loop. If there is enough money to do it on both sides Mrs. Gahagan will do that, but if not she will include more money for the split rail fencing in the FY17 budget.
- 6) *Gates*
Mrs. Gahagan is working with Mobile Fence Company on three sets of gates. The gates will be located at Stan Mahoney Lane, Philomene Holmes at Wolf Bay Drive and Philomene Holmes at Roscoe Road. The gates should sync together. The gates and operators are \$20,000 total. There will be two electrical gates and one solar gate working off one operator. The solar gate would be at Philomene Holmes at Roscoe Road. There will be a Welcome sign on Philomene Holmes Blvd. and off Wolf Bay Drive with a "Thank you" on the back side of the sign.
- 7) *Wagon*
Mrs. Gahagan budgeted for a wagon to be used for hay rides and access points to the back of the park. It will consist of standard height side panels and benches and pull able by City truck, her jeep or tractors.

Ten Year Plan

Mrs. Gahagan reported staff had to include a ten (10) year plan for items over \$1,000. The City operates on a fiscal year that begins October 1 each year.

2017 Capital Project Requests

1. 2 Pavilions at Graham Creek Nature Preserve

One will be by the Mountain Biking and Golf Disc Course's new parking lot and the other one will be by the Interpretive Center.

2. *Zip lines and Boulder Wall* - She is investigating the zip line and boulder wall like they have on Back Country Trail.
3. *Restroom Building at Wolf Creek Park* – Mrs. Gahagan reported that she feels like the Park is being used a lot due to the amount of trash seen on the property. There is a nice boardwalk through the cypress swamp and they will start work on the pavilion next week. Mrs. Gahagan is seeking a grant for a restroom building.

2018 Capital Project Requests

1. *BMX Track at Wolf Creek* – RTP grant money for trails is now available so she is requesting approximately \$30,000 to complete the rest of the mountain biking trails. The trails are cut but not groomed and she needs a root rake to go through all the trails and they all need to be marked. The jumps also need to be constructed. The match will be with labor. The mountain bikers have done a lot of out of pocket expenses that it would only be right in seeking one. The City has never done an RTP grant.

Center for Forestry

A few years ago Mrs. Gahagan spoke with the Alabama Forestry Commission about putting in a working demonstration forest on the backside of the park where the new disc golf course will be located and using the open field to plant trees so that the Forestry Commission can have a working forest for training people and conduct workshops. They are looking at a small facility with a bunk room on the top located by Russian Road so that the Forestry Commission can go in and work on the forest, do training and manage it. There are no forestry projects in Alabama or Florida and there are not many people who want burning. The GCNP has to burn any way. Mrs. Gahagan cannot go out to maintain the forest, and do the plantings with her staff and chronicle them. Auburn has been doing research projects with the School of Forestry. Auburn is a major partner with the Alabama Forestry Commission and would love to be a partner in this as well. This is a potential BP funding project.

Mr. Patterson reported that he thought this was a good idea. Mr. Singleton reported the area needs some type of educational center in forestry. Mrs. Gahagan reported they can research the invasive species that are taking over but it is not the same eco system that we have in our area. Having an area to do some training would be great. Several things were brought up at the last conference she did that is impacting forestry and no one is looking into it until you get further north. Mr. Singleton reported it is impacting a lot of our grass. The Japanese Climbing Fern is really poisonous. Mrs. Gahagan reported she is working with Mr. Jim Jeter and will call him to get something together. A research building with a dorm on the second floor would be great because they have a lot of students camping at the State Park because they can't afford to

rent a place and Weeks Bay is booked. She feels that she can get a grant for a building.

2. *West Pavilion with Restrooms* - A west pavilion and restroom by the entrance of the mountain bike trail in also on the list for 2018.

2019 Capital Project Requests

1. *Benches and Awnings* - Benches with awnings at different locations in the GCNP will be ideal for people walking in the park and will give people a place to rest out of the elements.

Eagle Scout Project

Mrs. Gahagan reported currently an Eagle Scout will be off setting some pilings at the power line crossing to do a legitimate foot bridge. R&S Paving, which is building at the Wolf Creek Park, is donating the pilings for the bridge. It has been a great team effort. Staff hopes to put in a portable foot bridge that can be moved with tractors before the Haunted Forest. This will prevent foot traffic in the stream bed.

2020 Capital Project Requests

1. *Kayak Rental Facility* - A small building for rentals of kayaks or canoes was discussed in the Master Plan.

Mrs. Gahagan asked for an approval of the projects for FY2016 that are in the first round of the budget and are not guaranteed. Mr. Singleton made a motion to approve the projects that were laid out and suggested by Mrs. Gahagan. Mr. Patterson seconded the motion and the vote passed unanimously.

Mrs. Gahagan will bring more information back to the Board as it is approved.

Marketing Plan

Mrs. Gahagan reported they looked at Pink Fish for doing the website. She hopes that it will be up very soon. People want information via website. In working with Pink Fish's marketing plan for next year they will be doing press releases through the website and social media.

After further discussion with Pink Fish they decided to go with Instagram, U-Tube, Facebook and Twitter for \$3,600. Instagram will catch the eye of the high school children. Katy Hines will be doing some intern things on Instagram for Mrs. Gahagan. Chairman Price reported Coach Niblett's website has a lot of varied sports and his daughter does Cross Country running and she would be a good source to help. Coach Niblett uses Sally Getter, FHS Girls Basketball Coach, for their website and there are a lot of children signing up on Twitter.

Mrs. Gahagan further reported that she was approached by Channel 15 for commercials, etc. They are more of an event based solution and she thinks that they may do a three month ad for the Corpse Crawl and the Haunted Forest because they are events. You get a flyer on their Facebook page for a couple hundred dollars a month. Chairman Price reported the Foley people, with Riviera Cable, listen to the events advertised on the ticker. WHEP also sends out information on events. Mrs. Gahagan reported Mr. Russ Moore is back at FHS as the Principle. He apologized about the last Cross Country Coaches and that he would be running it this year. He is very excited about helping their children and the Corpse Crawl and Haunted Forest.

Chairman Price reported the new football coach brought the team members to the Foley Elementary School to help out with "Playground Work Day". Coach was looking at the playground and said it didn't line up and they re-did all the pilings and gravel so that it would line up. He wanted the players not only to do community service but do a good job as well. Mrs. Gahagan reported that Don Staley and Coach Niblett negotiated for volunteers so that Don would have them for a few of the events.

Mrs. Gahagan reported that she felt that the website should be up soon. Mr. Patterson wants to get the information out to the neighborhood. Mrs. Gahagan will send him the information out in pdf form.

Mrs. Gahagan reported she is the Project Manager for the Bon Secour River Watershed Management Plan. They received funding to develop the comprehensive plan, which is approximately \$200,000; they just hired a consultant; and part of her goal is to leave the consultant in that watershed to get a plan. It will take over a year and will fund the City \$20,000 for our management skills of the project. She asked for office help for FY16. The grant is one thing but with all the other things they cannot keep up. They would like to have a staff person trained and on site when the Center opens so that person can do the bills, the time cards, update the website, handle phone calls, etc.

There was a discussion regarding the possibility of putting an enclosed cork outdoor bulletin board on the pedestrian bridge to advertise various events in the City.

OLD BUSINESS

Rental Contracts to be carried over to August

Intern Programs

Mrs. Gahagan reported on July 21, 2015 at 4:00 p.m. until 4:45 p.m. in the City Hall Conference Room Morgan Wills will be presenting an update on the 2010 Deepwater Horizon Incident on where we have gone, where we are going, etc.

It will also be presented in the Foley Library Conference Room at 1:00 p.m. on July 23, 2015. It will be an update on what the BP money has been spent.

REMINDERS

The next meeting will be August 6, 2015

VISITOR COMMENTS: There are none to report.

ADJOURN

Hearing no further comments Mr. Patterson made a motion to adjourn and Mr. Singleton seconded the motion. The vote passed unanimously. The meeting adjourned at 6:40 p.m.

Victoria Southern, CMC
Recording Secretary