

MINUTES

**GRAHAM CREEK NATURE PRESERVE ADVISORY BOARD
407 E. LAUREL AVENUE
FOLEY, ALABAMA
CONFERENCE ROOM
SEPTEMBER 3, 2015
5:30 P.M.**

MEETING

Call to Order/Roll Call

Chairman Price called the meeting to order at 5:33 p.m. Board members present: Chad Watkins, Tim Closson, Homer Singleton and Phillip Hinesley. Others present: Katy Taylor, Jacqueline Trimble, and Friends of Graham Creek - Allen Joseph, Georgia Bankston, and Donna Turbyfill.

MINUTES

Approve Minutes of August 6, 2015

Mr. Watkins made a motion to approve the August 6, 2015 minutes and Mr. Singleton seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

NEW BUSINESS

OLD BUSINESS

Discuss Rental Contracts

Mrs. Gahagan reported that she did not hear from anyone so she left it with the exception of adding the Graham Creek Logo to the top. She added "No pets are allowed in the Interpretive Center." It wasn't spelled out in the contract and pets are allowed in the park she wanted to make sure that specification was added to the contract. Mrs. Southern added in the nice section about the grills being pre-approved by the City or one that was already in place.

Mr. Hinesley questioned "The Nature Center furnishings are not to be moved from their location." Mrs. Gahagan reported that area is where the aquariums and display items will be located. The Interpretive Center is the meeting room and the items can be moved in that area. The Nature Center space is different from the Interpretive Center space. Mr. Hinesley asked if there will be someone at the Center all the time. Mrs. Hinesley reported the hours for the Center will be 10:00 a.m. until 4:00 p.m. Monday through Saturday. If someone rents the Center after hours she, Jackie or someone on staff will be present to handle the events. If there are a lot of rentals they will probably hire someone part-time. As long as the budget passes there will be a part-time office person that will rotate with Jackie, Leslie and David Eckman. They may also have volunteers to help out and maybe offer an incentive package for volunteers. They have already

been getting calls for renting the center and have already booked a wedding at the pavilion.

Mr. Singleton made a motion to approve the lease proposal packet and Mr. Hinesley seconded the motion. Mr. Hinesley asked if the Board should recommend approval to Council. We are recommending to Council approve. The motion died for lack of a vote. Mr. Singleton made a motion to recommend approval of the rental contracts. Mr. Hinesley seconded the motion. The vote passed unanimously.

Update on the Interpretive Centre

Mrs. Gahagan reported the first phase of the gravel road has been built and the building footprint, patio and parking area have been excavated. They are waiting on geotechnical reports before they put the base in and then they will begin the ground work. A construction trailer has been located on the grounds. At the same time they are working on the Philomene Holmes Blvd. and are working on a Corp. of Engineer's permit to continue with the road. There were a lot more wetlands in areas that were probably assumed were not wetlands because of the impact from the farm that was there years' ago so they are meeting with the Corp. next week to review it.

Dr. Kurtts called Mrs. Gahagan months ago about "The Hut" of Elberta and he might be running some classes through the Preserve. It might be paddle board or kayaking. They have a business in Elberta but they are looking at having other venues for their clientele to go out. Mr. Hinesley asked, "What is "The Hut"?"

Chairman Price reported when Dr. Kurtts had prostate cancer five or six years ago and his wife is a life coach. He went to a men's seminar about wellness and had a new found direction in applying healthy living and options to people. Some people do outbound in the wilderness and others do zip lines as a group. He is doing paddle boarding and the wellness center. He has people doing yoga, dietary seminars/coaching, counseling on healthy choices and exercise. Mrs. Gahagan reported that we have some serious internal City things to work out in City parks but since he is not exchanging money on City property for a service, his business is located in Elberta, and has a business license with the City of Foley, which he does, then he can have his class at the Preserve. They have been going out of Pirates Cove. We do have kayak companies come down but this is a little different.

Mrs. Gahagan reported David Eckman was paddling a kayak when a deer jumped into the creek.

Discuss the Corpse Crawl Event

Mrs. Gahagan reported she has a meeting with Ralph Gold, Foley High School Cross Country Coach. He is well known for doing this on a permanent basis. He is very energetic about it, obtained several sponsors, and a lot of work for the Corpse Crawl. They had to get donations for the Zombie Survival Kit and any other prizes that are given out. The flyer has been done and it is out. The Zombie zones and 15 obstacles have been determined. None of the obstacles will be added to existing obstacles at the park. They will bring out barricades, existing pole crossing over the beaver pond, "pretend" Ebola tents where people will be spraying people with bloody stuff, crawling under pipes and tables, existing walls, fog machines for a smoke screen, spider web maze (ropes tided up and down), the rope wall, a trench, mud mountains, and mud jump. They will have some vehicles from the Police Department and the want to get in touch with the YMCA to use their bus because they will need to run through the bus of zombies. All that needs to be done is weed eating and run the snakes off as it is a very easy set up.

They will need help with registration and they feel like they will get a very good response from the high school. It seems with the new Director they are more team oriented with all sports. Chairman Price reported Berkley can get volunteers for service hours. Mrs. Gahagan reported she will be talking to Interact, Key Club, and the Honor Society. If you register now it is \$25 for an individual or you can work as a team for \$20 per person and so many team members have to cross the line with the flag remaining on their body. It is a fun but difficult race because of the challenging obstacles and zombies chasing you. You can register online but there is a service charge added to the registration.

Discuss the Haunted Forest Event

After the Corpse Crawl the next two weekends on Friday and Saturday nights, from 6:30 until approximately 10:00 p.m. people will meet at the pavilion. Mrs. Gahagan reported she found someone that will construct a wagon with seats so she doesn't have to worry about someone falling off the wagon and putting people in the park at night. Light towers will be set up along the way in addition to six stations. The stations are as follows: 1) The Bird Ladies and they are going to do that one; 2) Jackie will be in charge of the swamp where there will be some voodoo looking things; 3) An Ebola zone and some people already want to do that one; 4) The Russian Road zone will include the crazy Russians; 5) The Freak Show, based on the American Horror Story, which is a popular TV show; and 6) In with the Freak Show will be Cat Man. They are pulling off some of the local legends or things that tie into the Park. The Freak Show will be set up in the clearing set up like a Circus with creepy things. They will disembark the trailer to go into the Freak Show and the tractor will go off with Cat Man chasing it and leave them stranded in the forest. They will then walk approximately 100 yards to

the creek crossing to get back to the open field. There will be some lanterns to provide some lighting. There will be hanging women from the 1906 hurricane. Mrs. Gahagan reported the ladies that were found were from her family. After the hurricane the ladies were found hanging by their hair in the trees. They will have some mannequins hanging in the trees. Next they will have to walk across the foot bridge that they are building. It will be a portable bridge so that they can move the foot bridge in/out just for these events and store it. The tractor will pick them up and take them back. It is \$15 per person for a 45 minute activity. She anticipates a great turn out.

Mr. Hinesley asked what legend had Ebola. Mrs. Gahagan reported Ms. Trimble and Erin, one of the interns, served in Africa so they brought it back with them as they did research in the park. She laughed and said they were stretching that one a bit but it is a good current topic.

The event will be good for kids to do and it brings awareness to the park. The South Baldwin Jaycees had the best haunted forest. They will be looking for volunteers and she has been personally purchasing masks and costumes that she will be loaning out to people. The High Schools, theatres, etc. will be volunteers, and City staff will be driving the tractors.

Coastal Wildlife Rescue & Research Center

Coastal Wildlife Rescue & Research Center is having a fundraiser fish fry on September 26, 2015 and a Chinese Raffle next to "Flippers" at Bear Point. They are trying to raise money to get them through the next nursery season with the baby birds. They have done really well with other fundraisers to keep afloat. They have two pelicans that we are working on getting a permit to take over. One is completely black and only has one wing and the other is blind in one eye and is completely white with pink on its feet. It's a great cause.

Alabama Coastal Cleanup

Mr. Hinesley reported the Alabama Coastal Cleanup will be held on Saturday, September 19, 2015 from 8:00 a.m. until noon. He passed out posters and brochures. Mrs. Gahagan reported Wolf Bay Watershed Watch will have a site at the old Wolf Bay Lodge location and Jeff Lyn is the team captain. This year they will also have Bon Secour's inaugural coastal cleanup with the new watershed management plan at Aquila's Seafood. The County will provide a dumpster and with the new site you have to bring your own boat.

The zone captains give you a t-shirt and you bring your group and they give you the data cards and gloves and everything you need to pick up trash. Some of the zones have hotdogs. Several sites have food and drinks.

Last year the Scouts went to Wolf Creek Park and some to Graham Creek Park. There was a lot of debris from Wolf Creek Park.

Derelict Vessels

Mr. Hinesley asked if there were any derelict vessels that needed to be taken care of as they have funds that could be used. Mrs. Gahagan reported she knew of two but she can see how many they can find. Soldier's Creek has one.

Friends of Graham Creek

Mrs. Gahagan recognized a couple of ladies from the Friends of Graham Creek, Allen Joseph, Georgia Bankston, and Donna Turbyfill. Ms. Turbyfill stated they wanted to come by and say hello. They have five board members who all participating at large. They also have Standard Smith and Heather Pritchard. She said that Maritta Johnson passed away. Allen Joseph was an organic farmer and Heather also has a lot of experience in horticulture and preservation.

Their basic mission is to support education and preservation at Graham Creek Nature Preserve. Their philosophy is they are not against anything but for education and preservation. Their primary goal is to act as a conduit so that when people donate funds for education they can take money to the bank and give it to back out again. They haven't done a ton yet but they did fund a field trip for Perdido Elementary and supplied equipment for the summer camps. She got a letter from the Foley Women's Club stating they are planning to donate again. They received a donation from a neighbor in San Diego. We have a Face Book page, website and email address. They want to spend the money as fast as they get it to ensure that it enhances the educational possibilities at the Park. They are hoping to purchase easy to maintain picnic tables for the kids to sit at and hope to get art boards. We are hoping to provide native trees to plant in the preserve in the field area where the tree area is located. They would love to see Pawpaw, Fringe and all kinds of native Alabama trees.

Chairman Price thanked them for the best opportunity to support the GCNP. She welcomed them and said they would be welcome any time. She also reported the Board also looked at a video of the Park during the last meeting.

Ms. Trimble asked if any of the Friends would like to volunteer. Ms. Turbyfill stated they were not set up to have a volunteer list but they are getting members. The members will be on an email distribution list. They would like to be connected so that when you do need volunteers we can distribute to the list. Hopefully there will be a couple of hundred people that would be interested in the Preserve so that when they do put out an email blast they will let them know who to contact for what event. She said it costs \$20 for an individual membership and \$35 for a

family membership. If you go to the website it is friendsofgrahamcre@wix.com. There is also PayPal as well as her address. There will be membership forms at different places within the next week of two. Mrs. Gahagan reported the Graham Creek Preserve has 900 friends. She has already been asked about funds for a field trip so that children who cannot afford to come. Ms. Trimble is working on a grant to do some water activities with children and would like to have potentially scholarships for camps in the future. Her idea is to steer funding to the Friends and even in the next year after the Center is completed the forest could go through the Friends.

Ms. Turbyfill asked if the Center would be named any particular name. Mrs. Gahagan reported it will be called the Graham Creek Interpretive Center and the road will be Philomene Holmes Boulevard. They do have names for the trails and they are all nature based because E-911 already has so many street names. She did report as they get critters people could donate to name the alligators, or make a donation for the memorial trees, benches and memorial plaques. There were four trees and a butterfly garden that could be named in memory of someone. We have a grant for the ADA trail and the idea is that there will be things along the trail for the opportunity to have plaques.

Ms. Turbyfill asked the Board to introduce themselves. Chairman Price started off the introductions. She is a fifth generation Foley native, very involved with things involving Foley, and her grandson has been very involved in the camps since they started having camps. Chad Watkins is a landscape architect, business owner who lives downtown Foley. Tim Closson lives and works in Foley and a resident disc golfer. Homer Singleton grew up here and his grandmother began his love of birding and works with Wolf Bay Watershed Watch. Philip Hinesley with ADCNR (Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources), is Vice Chair of Foley Planning Commission and lives in Foley. Katy Taylor is the Assistant City Clerk. Mrs. Gahagan reported missing is Tommy Patterson, who is the Vice Chairman, and has a background in forestry and lives close to the Preserve, and Greg Knight is out as well is from Foley and has 20 years of experience in the military and works in security. Jackie Trimble will be the person requesting supplies and volunteers. Mrs. Gahagan further reported if the FY16 budget passes it contains a full-time Parks Ranger. David "Spud" Eckman who is a local person and parents are farmers. His background is horticulture and landscaping. He graduated from Auburn University and has been working as a temporary part-time employee almost a year. She hopes to hire him as the full-time Parks Ranger. Once the center is open she hopes to have someone help with office duties and run the Nature Center as it will be open six days a week six hours a day so the public will have a place to go to prior to going out to the Preserve.

REMINDERS

The next meeting will be October 1, 2015

VISITOR COMMENTS

None to report.

ADJOURN

Mr. Watkins made a motion to adjourn and Mr. Singleton seconded the motion.
The meeting adjourned at 6:20 p.m.

Katy Taylor
Acting Recording Secretary