

MINUTES

**GRAHAM CREEK NATURE PRESERVE ADVISORY BOARD
GRAHAM CREEK INTERPRETIVE CENTER
23030 WOLF CREEK DRIVE
FOLEY, ALABAMA 36530
CONFERENCE ROOM
JANUARY 25, 2018
5:30 P.M.**

MEETING

Call to Order/Roll Call

Chairman Zana Price called the meeting to order at 5:35 p.m. Members present: Tommy Patterson, Tim Closson, Gregg Knight, Phillip Hinesley, Chad Watkins, and Ralph Hellmich. Absent: Homer Singleton. Others present: Leslie Gahagan, Jacqueline McGonigal and Recording Secretary, Brenda Shambo.

MINUTES

Approve Minutes of August 10, 2017

Mr. Gregg Knight made a motion to approve the August 10, 2017 minutes and Mr. Tommy Patterson seconded the motion. The vote passed unanimously.

Annual Report -

I thought the Board would be interested in this information, we added an additional Disc Golf course, Memorial Tree Grove, 4 Eagle Scout Projects and Philomene Homes Blvd. with the Creek Crossing done with concrete, which is working well now, all this completed this year. We had 13 paid rentals at the Pavilion and 10 at the Interpretive Center which included about 950 people. There were 29 days of Civic uses, classes and meetings during regular business hours, such as Police Training and several different groups of people meeting here.

Annual Calendar -

We had so many events here in 2017 that we captured 9,000 attendees coming through Graham Creek Nature Preserve due to our events.

In our Educational Programs we had 24 observe and Explore Days, 17 Field Trips, 26 Work Shops and Tours, 3 Summer Camps where we reached 4,925 people, this number does includes adults and children. Then Jackie went out on 2 major events not on site where she communicated information. We were amazed at the turnout for events and that with only 4 staff members that we could pull all this off. The Board commented that the City is getting their money's worth on these 4 City Employees.

Discuss Fall Events –

Bolting for the Beach, which was a Labor Day Race, we had about 100 to 150 students and they were all from out of town, so the hotels got 3 night stay out of them. I believe they will be back.

1st National Collegiate Archery Tournament, we had about 100 archers, all of them were from out of town, they will be back, already signed a contract, we will be on their national circuit. This is an easy event, no vendors and not much to setup, low cost for the City.

Haunted Forrest – The first weekend in the two nights we had about 150 people. The 2nd weekend, we had the Archery Tournament and it rained and we couldn't run the event.

Wicked Walk – We presold tickets for \$20, and had scheduled to make 2 trips, then had to turn people away because each trip lasted an hour or more. We loaded people up on wagons and took them across the property to Russian Road, they loved it was for 18 years and older, they didn't like it being on Halloween Night because some of them have kids and need to be with them. Next year let's look at having it the night before Halloween. The event was a huge success, and very dark and scary, we even had a Disc Golf group dressed up as Killer Clowns in the middle of the forest. It was a lot of fun very successful will definitely do it again next year, the run time was really long with nothing so we will shorten the travel time next year.

Disc Golf Tournament – Really good, had about 100 people showed up.

Greek Crawl – Ended up with 209 Racers, they came in from all over, almost 100% positive feedback, best race ever, kind of comments. I think we will keep it that time of year. That event was a lot of fun, at the end they jumped in the creek and swam to the canoe launch in the middle of November. We had a lifeguard in the water to help people across if they needed it, also if they didn't want to get in the water they could run an extra half mile. There were no injuries and everyone made it across the finish line, they really enjoyed the Beer and Ms. Katy's jamboula.

Lastly we added for our Observe and Explore Day since it was so cold in December, we purchased a Santa Suit and one of our volunteers played Santa. We set up a hot chocolate bar, made crafts and took pictures with Santa. There were about 50 kids and they were all very appreciative.

The Pumpkin Play Day – That event is really growing, we had 392 people signed in, they came from all over and we only had 5 pumpkins left over.

Zana talked about the Winter Visitors coming in the Medical Museum and talking about all the improvements that have been done at Graham Creek, what a nice facility that is. Leslie stated that as long as the sun it up, people are out walking the trails, with lots of the winter guests coming out walking their dogs.

Ralph asked if the ADA Trail was used much, it is, but we need to add on to it, people don't think it's long enough.

Calendar for this year hasn't changed much, same events scheduled.

The Archery Tournament is scheduled from February 19 to February 25, they will start competing February 22nd. The archery tournament should be as big if not bigger than last year. We were voted the top archery stop in the nation by the competitors, so everyone that shoots archery wants to shoot here. The Archery Tournaments in the spring will be our biggest events. We have gotten a better grasp on some problems we had in the past, there will be some changes on the parking, putting up more barricades, painting arrows and adding a temporary new entrance with large red signs designating reserved parking areas, this should help with parking. The vendors will be parking out front, adding a new electrical receptacle by the gravel parking lot for them. Meeting with Police about the timing of the traffic entering and exiting the Park, officers will be directing and working with the red lights, at County Road 12 and Wolf Bay Drive, also at the Beach Express. Working on a route for our tractors picking up people and dropping them off, this was a problem last year with them loading and unloading in certain areas and stopping the traffic and parking. We have redone our ranges out here, so we now have officially two ranges on the trails that gives us less impact deep into the woods. Zana mentioned during the Archery Shoot Outs, more portable bleachers are needed, last year the bleachers were full and people were 10 deep on the sidelines. Leslie will talk with David Thompson about getting more, you have to be careful with the placement so they are not down range. We purchased some used wetland mats to be placed in low areas, they will allow the water to flow underneath, the electric companies use them and they are Corps of Engineer approved. This way we won't need any bridge structures and we can leave these down or pull them up. Tommy asked if Philephone Homes Blvd. could be used as an exit, we will be looking at that this year especially on Sunday for it to be a major exit. I just have to be real careful when we let the mass of people leave that all the ranges are clear, so maybe when the last award is handed out we can steer some vehicles out that way. I just don't want vehicles driving all through the wet areas in the Park.

We won't be doing Earth Day this year, Angie will already be out and Jackie on her way out for maternity leave. I am going to team up with the Farmers Market and have a booth out there this year.

We have started setting up our Camps, Jackie has been working on the advertising, getting that information out to the public. We are adding a survival camp this year, Jackie and David both attended survival camps, Jackie went to the mountains and David went to the swamps. We will combine both of these camps and develop a survival camp for teens, it will be a two day camp.

I'm sure there will be items added to the calendar, as people start booking events. Ralph asked if they had many weddings scheduled. Yes, we've had several weddings, birthday parties, and baby showers out here. Angie takes the calls and shows the building and gives them the needed paperwork. Our wedding venue has been marketed a lot more lately, we are getting calls from Mobile wanting to

get married out here. Tommy asked if the events were on the web-site, we've had some internal problems changing the information on the web-site, we are working on it with Pink Fish. That would probably help with phone calls, when people driving by and see all the cars if they could just check the web-site and see what events were going on.

Pets – We've had multiple complaints about dogs running loose out here, it's always been a challenge out here, but David just can't be everywhere to enforce the leash law. Brenda added that she has received a few complaints on the City web-page. We have people out here who love dogs and then we have people who hate dogs, and they will all be out here at the same time. Our policy states that all dogs must be on a leash at all times, but the City Ordinance Policy states that Graham Creek is an exception for the leash law in certain areas. That exception was made so that people could run their dogs in the fields, which is not a terrible thing but they must control their dogs. The dogs are now running loose on the trails and in the park areas which is a problem. This is going to be a huge challenge but I want to post signs at all the park entrances, All Dogs must be on a leash, then do we want to designate certain areas where they will be allowed to be off a leash? But if we decide no dogs can be off a leash that will cause some problems, because we do have some older gentleman that do run their dogs in the fields and control them. The Board members talked about the pros and cons for this decision. Phillip and Ralph added that at the Bon Secour Wildlife Refuse, you can't have a dog anywhere out there, even on a leash, you will get a ticket. Phillip Hinesley made a motion that the City Ordinance pertaining to dogs being on a leash apply and we install signage to enforce this for the entire boundaries of Graham Creek Nature Preserve. Gregg Knight seconded the motion, all approved. Police Dogs in training are exempt from this Ordinance. Leslie will get signs made and posted. David will have to follow this rule with his dog as well, because he will be the one enforcing it.

Capital Projects for 2018 – We only have one item down for a Capital Project for the 2018 Budget and that is to enhance our maintenance area, the little conex on the other side. I'm glad we put that in this year's budget because the roof has holes rusted all the way through. It has a lean to off one side, we will hook to that and add a half roof. These are used for storage of tools, and for the tractors and mowers.

We have also included in that money to put down poles upstream from the canoe launch to add a foot bridge, we will build the bridge in house, but get a contractor to come sink the poles. The footbridge will be located just off the red trail, just to the south of the canoe launch, back in the woods, but we needed an option up there due to the creek flooding so much, we wanted a footbridge that was put in right. That's in the plans but I don't know if that will happen this year, the roof will get repaired but we'll have to see if we have money left in the budget.

Open Air Pavilions – We met with the Contractor this morning they will be building two Open Air Pavilions with a 14' X 28' concrete bottom with a shingled roof, it will have a side fenced in area to store the solar equipment which will be monitoring the shingle life. They will have signage that talks about solar and the Insurance Company. One will be located by the rope ball field which is by the fire pit, that one will be used by the Boy Scouts. The second one is going in the far back field by the Preserve, by the raised basket, that one will be used by the Disc Golfers and hikers. The Insurance Group did not want us to put them up here where there is a lot of traffic for fear they would be damaged. They will be studding those shingles for 30 years.

Friends of the Preserve – They took our Yellow Trail and overlapped it with the Boy Scouts Tree Trail, to put together a publication. I went out checking and some of the trees were marked wrong and a couple were dead, so we have to work on that. When completed this will be a nice publication of about a 1 mile walk, listing 10 different trees and a whole page with pictures, then some information on the Pitcher plants. The publishing will be done in house but they have done all the creation and text.

You probably noticed we had some work done out here today, we took down 2 Water Oak Trees, they were in bad shape, but when they had to rebuild the brim and piled the dirt up around them that finished the trees.

Memorial Tree Grove – In the future this will probably be another Capital Purchase for the budget. We did the boardwalk and now we need to extend the Boardwalk to bring it back up. I'm out of room for the Memorial Trees, so I'm going to have to find other locations for the trees.

Brenda has been helping me with this project, getting the information on the people that have Memorial Trees out here, I would like to start in the spring having a Walk and talking about the people who have the Memorial Trees/Plaques out here.

A Memorial Busch was planted out here for a soldier that was from Foley, he wasn't killed in the war, but died after he returned home. His classmates purchased a Butterfly Busch with a plaque and they each painted a rock, it's a very nice addition.

Arbor Day is coming up on Saturday, February 24 at 1:00pm at the Farmer's and Fisherman's Market, we will be giving away about 360 Trees in 3 gallon containers, so please come join us and get a tree. The Revitalization & Beautification Board will present 3 Memorial Trees this year to J.M. Lee, Sidney Kaiser and Pat Brackin.

Rental Application – We've already talked about that, we are staying busy. I don't need to make any changes at this time, may have to do something if the tablecloths keep getting lots of use, at some point will need to replace them.

New Business: This is extremely important. The Interpretative Center is now the official polling place for Baldwin County, for those in the Miflin area that is South of CR20, West of Hamic Creek, and East of the Foley Beach Express. They will all vote here. They have to have the Center all day and night for that Tuesday of the election, also on the delivery date for the voting machines, which we will store them in the lab. We put the dates on our calendar, we will get a lot of traffic in here that day. Miflin Community Center was ousted due to not meeting the ADA requirements. Ralph asked about the lighting out here, for 2018 Election we will be borrowing the light tower from the Fire Department for the parking lot.

Then for 2019 budget year, we will need to ask for more lighting out here. Ralph talked about the smart lighting which is around City Hall, it goes on and off with motion.

We are now a Community Service Hub for the Courts, we have to find stuff for people to do for Community Service. I have a girl coming out here this week to pick up rocks out of the grass, where someone came out here and did donuts in the parking lot and threw rocks everywhere.

Please take your flyer for the Easter Egg Hunt, we had so many kids last year, we are doing 1000 eggs this year. We had 100's of kids, kids everywhere. We have two areas, the smaller kids are in the classroom and the bigger kids are outside around the classroom. Yes, this is a very popular activity.

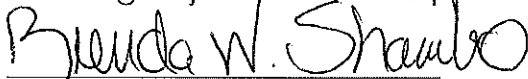
Meeting Date – To be scheduled in the Spring April/May.

VISITOR COMMENTS

There were no visitor comments.

ADJOURN

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



Brenda W. Shambo
Recording Secretary