

MINUTES

**GRAHAM CREEK NATURE PRESERVE ADVISORY BOARD
GRAHAM CREEK INTERPRETIVE CENTER
23030 WOLF CREEK DRIVE
FOLEY, ALABAMA 36530
CONFERENCE ROOM
AUGUST 10, 2017
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: Homer Singleton, Tommy Patterson, Tim Closson, Chad Watkins. Absent: Phillip Hinesley, Gregg Knight, Ralph Hellmich. Others present: Leslie Gahagan, and Recording Secretary, Brenda Shambo.

MINUTES

Approve Minutes of April 13, 2017

Mr. Tommy Patterson made a motion to approve the April 13, 2017 minutes and Mr. Homer Singleton seconded the motion. The vote passed unanimously.

Graham Creek Nature Preserve Hours of Operation –

We are currently open at the Nature Preserve and Interpretive Center Monday through Friday from 10am to 4pm and on Saturday from 10am to 2pm. Leslie asked the Board if during the dead winter months which is November through January 3rd to change the hours to Monday through Saturday from 10am to 2pm. It's only Jackie and myself here after that time, the lady up front only works half days so she leaves at 2pm and Jackie and I are scrambling and having to close it some days anyway, so that we can go do our inspections and meetings. In the 2018 Budget which will begin in October, in the second quarter, January 1st we have been approved so that our part time lady up front will go to full time which will help us out. Our busy time is usually from 10am to 12 Noon each day. The Snowbirds will start coming back in January. After the discussions, Homer Singleton made a motion to change the hours for this time frame, Chad Watkins seconded and it passed unanimously. The new hours will be posted at the Pavilion, Interpretive Center and on our web-site.

Leslie said for the Holidays, we will be closing the Center from December 20th until January 2nd so that all the employees will be able to enjoy the Holidays. This is what we did last year and it worked out fine, no one comes in the week of Christmas, we will be working events that are booked. Tommy asked about putting something outside so that people could leave a note that they were here and the Center was not open. Leslie said they do leave notes if they close the Center and are in another location, we have received some nasty notes.

Discuss Fall Events –

We had to meet with Emergency Services, I didn't realize how many events we have coming up, and we have 10 large events booked from September 2nd through the end of November. I have attached a list of those events for you to review. The first one is Bolting for the Beach, this is a Cross County Race event put on by the High School, they are trying to bring in schools from all over and have marketed the event to all SEC High Schools and Middle Schools. We could easily have from 300 to 500 students here for that race. This event will get the tourism traffic started and help us get ready early, and it's not much work for us, just mowing the path and putting up turn signs. A food truck will be out here, working with Wolf Bay Lodge on this one, Sports Tourism has contracts on those and they tell me which ones are coming.

- Police Dog Trials, so during this time there will be lots of police cars from all over, and also the week before to practice. They will be using the field area out front and the Center. We only host a small segment of this event and the rest of the trials will be held at the Sports Complex.
- Middle School Races – With these races they have so many spectators that come to watch so in the past we've had some parking and traffic issues.
- Foley Invitational, Cross Country Race put on by the High School, races start at 8am, we have emergency services to help us with traffic.
- Riviera Utilities – 5K Run/Walk, They want to get their employees more healthy, using our courses and pavilion.
- Pumpkin Play Day – This event has grown from 50 Children to 200 last year, lots of fun with face painting and reading stories, some of the Friends of the Preserve help us with this event.
- Haunted Forest – Looks like we had about 350 in attendance over the 4 nights, estimated from the revenue generated. You have a flyer in your packet of information. We did change the route up some this year, it will be more walking. People coming to this are in their 20's they are coming from Mobile and Pensacola to our events. This is our best money making event. Some of our feedback was that they love our stories, so we have to keep coming up with good local stories. I will be asking for volunteers from the community.
- Collegiate Championship Archery – They are here all day, come in on buses or vans, no spectators, should be from 250 to 500 archers, we won't know exact numbers until a week before the event. They get an hour for lunch so we serve them a boxed lunch. They are high maintenance, we have to entertain them after the events, it's all planned, so should not be a big deal.
- Walk the Wicked Woods (October 31st) – New for this year, preselling 40 Tickets, it will be a guided tour, 18 years of age or older, should be a fun event.
- Mid-Summer Melt Down – Tim said this event was a huge success with 128 participants, some came from over 75 miles away, Memphis, Texas, North

Carolina and Louisiana. They played with a heat index of 108 degrees, even with this, it was our biggest turnout yet.

- Graham Creek Shootout – The event in November with more money available and if we can get the big names to come, we can expect 150 or more players. We are expecting the 4 Time Women's World Champ to be here. which will be great for our event. Getting more food trucks out here, Tim has been doing most of the cooking for these events. Also, looking for sponsors for this event.
- Creek Crawl – The last time we held this event was in 2014, we've had so much interest, decided to bring it back this year. It's a mud run, we have enough obstacles so we won't have to build any. Jackie has designed a 4 mile course, but at the end they will have to jump into the water and come up on the boat ramp. For the \$35 registration fee, Katy's Catering, Beer and a DJ, if we get 150 to 200 participants, this will be a money maker for the Preserve.

If you have any questions about the events, please just let us know.

For your information on the events, we have consistently booked one wedding per month except for December and January, we already have 2 booked for March. The word is getting out that this is a nice venue, received several calls from Schools, and Columbia Southern to have classes, team building and teacher training.

Our Newsletter will be coming out August 31st, the last newsletter was well received. It's emailed to everyone that has signed our book at the Interpretative Center, Friends of the Preserve, City Employees, and also posted on our Facebook page. It will cover all the events we just discussed plus we want to highlight all the Eagle Scout Projects. Those have been organized and they have completed 10 projects out here, with 4 more getting ready to begin. We want to have a plaque in the Nature Center to acknowledge these accomplishments with the Scouts name, Troup Number, Year and Project. I would also like to put a small plaque on the Swing/Arbor on the Memorial Trail. Other articles in the Newsletter will be Invasive Plant Management, Pitcher Plant Blog, Blue Way Trail, Friends of the Preserve and Coastal Clean Up.

Highlight a couple of projects:

- The Beautification Board has approved an Interpretive Center Entrance, we have no signage out here. We ordered the sign and the Beautification Board is going to beautify the area around the sign for us. The project will add split rail fencing, native plants, irrigation, and some soft solar based up lighting.
- Built Philomene Homes Road across the creek, had all those culvert pipes, but with one of those bad rains it totally messed it up. The reason it didn't hold was that Philomene Road and parking lot all bypassed the pond

completely and eroded itself out. They have now built a big berm to divert the water into the detention pond, and repaired the road. The crews will be coming back to get it to fix the detention pond so that it will drain and perk, so then we will have a functional pond.

- The two Pavilions that the Insurance Agency are going to put up to test shingles, that work should begin within the next month, they will be located in the back.
- Next year's budget will include Working Gates, two electric gates upfront and one solar gate in the back. Our goal with the gates is that we could then fully open up Philomene Homes Road, but without the gates I can't see that happening. This could possible happen in March or April after archery.
- Maintenance Area Enhancement – Our building that we store stuff in is falling apart and part of that money would be for pilings to build a little foot bridge, west of the canoe launch, so that the hikers can go back and forth.

Tommy asked if the road going to the back would we be moving that gate, Leslie said when Philomene Homes Road is open and gated that gate will be moved. It's gated now and they are going all the way around on Russian Road.

Brenda brought in several articles featured in the Foley Onlooker about Graham Creek camps and events.

Also, Baldwin EMC needs a project for their Community Work Day, they will be happy to come out and work again at the Preserve.

Leslie stressed that they are always needing Volunteers for the Camps and Events.

Leslie talked about feeding the snakes, warming up mice in the microwave.

Adopting a baby possum, they were also given a marsh rabbit.

Please check out all our critters in the Nature Center.

Next Meeting Date – To be scheduled at a later date.

VISITOR COMMENTS

There were no visitor comments.

ADJOURN

Mr. Chad Watkins made a motion to adjourn and Mr. Homer Singleton seconded the motion. The vote passed unanimously. Hearing no further comments the meeting adjourned at 6:45 p.m.

Brenda W. Shambo
Recording Secretary