

## MINUTES

**GRAHAM CREEK NATURE PRESERVE ADVISORY BOARD  
GRAHAM CREEK INTERPRETIVE CENTER  
23030 WOLF CREEK DRIVE  
FOLEY, ALABAMA 36530  
CONFERENCE ROOM  
JANUARY 5, 2017  
5:30 P.M.**

### MEETING

#### Call to Order/Roll Call

Chairman Zana Price called the meeting to order at 5:40 p.m. Members present: Homer Singleton, Phillip Hinesley, Gregg Knight, and Tommy Patterson. Absent: Tim Closson, and Chad Watkins. Others present: Leslie Gahagan, Jacqueline McGonigal, Ralph Hellmich, and Recording Secretary, Brenda Shambo.

### MINUTES

#### Approve Minutes of October 6, 2016

Mr. Singleton made a motion to approve the October 6, 2016 minutes and Mr. Patterson seconded the motion. The vote passed unanimously.

2016 Calendar of Events – Here are the numbers Leslie reported to Council, Jackie helped me compile all this information and we had 15 Events with approximately 7, 500 people, 25 Educational Programs such as Observe and Explore plus one extra event with 500 attendees, then 26 other Events for a total of 1700 people being educated through our programs last year. For a grand total of 10, 000 people in both our Educational Programs and the Events, and that's not counting our daily visitors to the park, such as the disc golfers, dog walkers, etc. that we don't keep records on. The Park's numbers are speaking for themselves.

Just for reference in October, Jackie has 140 signed in for the Observe and Explore programs, so these October numbers, we are up to almost all of last year's numbers. It's only growing, our Races have really taken off. We were selected to host the County Championships, we received praise on the set-up, and several commented that this was the best place they had ever ran.

#### ***Discuss New Events –***

2017 Calendar – I want to bring up to the Board that we would like to close the center on weekends when there is a holiday. It's really tough with a staff of only 3 with 1 part-time employee, to have someone come in and have to work a Saturday. I have some of these days we will be closed on the calendar and some are not.

The Observe and Explore Programs are listed, then the major events such as the ASA Archery Tournaments in February.

Our busy months are February, April and of course October.

In September we will be hosting the Canine Championship that is the K9 Dogs or drug dogs, we will only be hosting one of these activities here, and the others will be at the Sports Complex. Tommy, you will probably be getting some calls on this, the front field will not be mowed at all this summer, it will be a defined area but it has to get waist high, they will then mow squares were the dogs will hunt things.

Then 2 or 3 times a year the SWAT Teams come out here training, I don't usually put that one on the calendar, it's usually a short time frame when they tell us they are coming. But it gets pretty intense with all the police cars, dogs and even helicopters, you may get some calls with people thinking that we have something really bad going on out here.

There are 2 Cross Country meets scheduled and we may get to host the championships, no dates on those at this time.

We have also been accepted as the Colligate Archery Tournament for 2017, this will be college teams with about 400 to 500 team members. This will not be nearly as big as the February tournament with all the vendors and such. They will shoot here during the middle of the day and then in the afternoons they will be at the Championship Soccer Complex. This is scheduled for October 26 – 28, it will be during our Haunted Forest. This is a big event, some of these shooters will go on to the Olympics. Yes, we will maintain a select 3 or 4 of the best lanes and David mows around those quite often anyway. We will have some of the targets stocked. They are buying us a convex to store the targets that will be kept in the Bird Enclosure. The targets would not last being kept outside, plus we don't want people out there shooting all the time.

Jackie said that several of these ranges have been incorporated into our updated trail system, like the wildlife viewing stations and some benches have been installed, which were based on recommendations and requests made by the community members.

Not having the Corpse Crawl this year, we are bringing back the Creek Crawl which will be on November 18<sup>th</sup>. November will be fairly busy but we won't have as many events overlapping like we do in October.

We have 1 Wedding scheduled on the calendar, but I have put them off due to revising the rental forms. You would know the day they want is the one day in October that we have open.

Tommy asked if the calendar is on the Graham Creek web-site, we are presently working on getting that updated. Zana made the comment that if we send it to LaDonna at the Welcome Center that she can get it added to the City of Foley web-site. Leslie said she is presently working with all 3 City web-sites, (City of Foley, Visit Foley.com and Graham Creek) at this time none of them are correct, they all need to be updated. Tommy said it would be helpful, so that when the neighbors see lots of cars they know where to look and see what's going on and not call him.

Zana asked about the 2 weeks of Explorer Camps and 1 week of Pioneer Camps, the Explorer Camp are from 8 a.m. to 12 noon for ages 5 to 9 years old, this one is always filled up. The Pioneer Camp for the older kids is usually not full.

### **Rental Forms**

Leslie asked everyone to please review the Rental Forms, this is very important that we get these revised, all these different forms are a nightmare.

Alcohol form, I just condensed it and made it 1 page.

Rules & Regulations, took out some items that did not pertain to us and we will be going over this form very closely with the renter and make sure they understand and have them initial each page. For example, they can't have lit candles in this Interpretive Center conference room.

Application – Made a few changes to it and incorporated the Fee Schedule with the price changes that we approved last meeting and I have also added a damage fee. Kept the discounts the same and just spelled out more information for the renter.

For weddings the charge is \$600, we allow them to come in the day before during work hours to decorate and then the day of the wedding they can come in at 10 a.m. to 11 p.m.

Pricing of the facility can be reviewed when needed but since we are new, let's keep the rates as they are.

Tommy asked about holding HOA meetings at the center, Leslie said they would work with them on the pricing.

I will present these revised Rental Forms to Council after the Board approves them.

Mr. Gregg Knight made a motion to accept the revised forms and rates and Mr. Homer Singleton seconded the motion. The vote passed unanimously.

### **Event Information**

Zana shared that the Mullet Wrapper is a good source to get our information out about events. Leslie said they had a meeting on that subject today, and that was our biggest failure last year was not getting the information out to the restaurants.

We learned that you can't just notify the Chamber of Commerce and get the information out to all the businesses. Several of them are big franchises with their main offices someplace else and they don't belong to our local Chamber, so they don't get the mailings about these events. LaDonna Hinsley and Don Staley are working on getting people in place to help with this.

### **Archery Tournaments**

Last year we did not expect the numbers of Archers that we had, so this year we met with them in November and they are projecting for 2017, 2,500 Archers for a total of 6,000 people in the park over the four days. Several of these people treat this as a vacation and come stay all week. Leslie talked with one of the Tractor guys and he has grandchildren that competes in the archery tournaments and they travel to different locations. When he tells people he's from Foley Alabama, they told him that is the best place we've played, the nicest people and the best lanes so we are expecting everyone to show up. So with these additional numbers we have added 2 more ranges.

We will have 8 RV's on the grounds, not counting the 29 Vendors around the building , we will be able to accommodate 6 up front with the power that we have then we will have to put 2 in the back by the bathrooms, I just don't have the power up front. Tommy said that was a concern to them that it doesn't look like a Camp Ground. The vendors that will be around the buildings are not RV's they have big trailers that house their equipment and the sales merchandise, these will not have people staying in them. The other 8 RV's will have people staying in them, this will be your vendors. Last year we had 6 or 7 RV's parked behind the building, this year we will only have 2 back there. They will start coming in on Wednesday, February 15<sup>th</sup> and be here until Sunday, February 19<sup>th</sup>. Also, this year the vendors will have parking passes and layouts ahead of time, so they will know their parking location when they arrive. We did have several just show up last year and tried to park here, we had to run them off. Tommy just stressed that they did not want it to look like an RV Park. For water and sewer the have to go to a pump out station, no problems with any of that last year. These vendors have a million dollars' worth of merchandise, they are nice people. No alcohol allowed on grounds. They did have an after party at the Pavilion with about 50 people, they had a crawfish boil and beer, and we had no problems.

The tractor club will have 5 wagons running, 3 in the parking lots and 2 running up and down the ranges moving people from one place to another. The kids will also be helping people getting up into the wagon and off.

This building will be used to the max with 40 to 50 vendors inside, then in the tents and on the sides.

The Nature Center will be used by some of Don's employees handing out goody bags that LaDonna has fixed up with City of Foley Event dates and coupons.

## Problems

We did have some litter blowing around, that was due to not having enough trash receptacles, and we will have plenty out there this year.

Another problem was food concessions, we were not ready for food trucks so we only had 1 food vendor and 1 coffee vendor. That was a disaster so this year we plan on having 3 food vendors, and 1 coffee vendor, plus the NASP the homeschool archery club that will be selling concessions on the ranges, they will walk up and down the ranges selling hotdogs and drinks, this gives that club the money to compete in the tournaments. The Archers really loved that, seeing the kids get involved.

The impact on the Park was minimum. We burned it off right after the tournament, so now the park is really looking good with all the new growth. It all worked out well, and Ralph agreed that he thought everything went great for a first time event and next year will be even better.

## **Roads, Traffic and Construction**

Thanks to Mayor and Council, the road should be completed up to the Creek before the tournament, it's almost done now. The gravel road that will be Philomene Homes Road and then completion of the creek crossing when the CORE gets back with us. The tractors had no problem crossing the existing road way, as they turned off the road to the right, there is a wet muddy hole and everyone got stuck. That gravel road will make a huge difference. It does make the trails a little different, so Jackie has been working hard to change the trail markings and get them more user friendly with better signage. Tommy asked if the gate would be open, Leslie said no, due to that road not connecting and she couldn't imagine cars trying to go through the cattle gate. It's being discussed for the west bound traffic on CR12 to have a stop sign then the Wolf Bay Drive traffic make left hand turn without stopping. Ralph said they had talked about making that a 3 way stop, it would be well marked or even lighted. During the event when everyone is leaving the Police will control the lights at the Beach Express and keep the traffic flowing. Next year when the road is completed, we still do not want them coming in that way, because they would be parking all over the park. But they would be able to exit that way, and that will help with the traffic flow leaving the facility. The cost for the creek crossing is estimated at \$300,000, not known when that money will be available. Leslie said they were going to do a temporary fix with 7 30" pipes to keep it hydro logically connected and it will be better than it is now and it will be an all-weather surface.

The pilings have been set for our ADA Boardwalk and the carpenters should be in her next week and that project should go up quick, I've asked them to be finished by March 1<sup>st</sup>. During the archery tournament this area will be blocked off, you would be in the safety zone due to arrows flying.

*Next Meeting Date* – Will be on Thursday, April 6, 2017 at 5:30 p.m.

VISITOR COMMENTS

There were no visitor comments.

ADJOURN

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

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Brenda W. Shambo  
Recording Secretary