

MINUTES

**GRAHAM CREEK NATURE PRESERVE ADVISORY BOARD
GRAHAM CREEK INTERPRETIVE CENTER
23030 WOLF CREEK DRIVE
FOLEY, ALABAMA 36530
CONFERENCE ROOM
JUNE 7, 2018
5:30 P.M.**

MEETING

Call to Order/Roll Call

Chairman Zana Price called the meeting to order at 5:36 p.m. Members present: Tommy Patterson, Tim Closson, Phillip Hinesley, and Homer Singleton Absent: Gregg Knight, and Chad Watkins. Others present: Leslie Gahagan, and Recording Secretary, Brenda Shambo.

MINUTES

Approve Minutes of January 25, 2018

Mr. Phillip Hinesley made a motion to approve the January 25, 2018 minutes and Mr. Homer Singleton seconded the motion. The vote passed unanimously.

Rental Contract Updates:

A couple of changes that need to be made to the Rental Contract is about the rental of the tablecloths, we've asked Starr Textile for pricing but have not heard back from them. It costs us \$6 each to have them cleaned and pressed so that's what I've added for the rental for the tablecloths. Plus they usually use more than they say and sometimes less, but now the renter will sign off on how many they actually use. In the near future we need to look at charging more for the large weddings, \$600 probably doesn't even cover our staff time, with the set-up, the event and then clean up. We won't do it this year but let's think about it for next year, we are already booking for next year. The pavilion is rented out most of the summer. In our contract we give the Schools a 25% discount for evening events such as banquets, for example the ladies softball banquet, they came in and set-up and then swept and moped the floors, I would like to waive the fees on a discretionary basis. This would be for small school groups not for just sporting events and these are scheduled on week nights so it wouldn't interfere with our weekend rentals.

Summer Programs:

We were a little nervous about advertising in the paper about our camps because in the past they have filled up really fast. It was a nice article that ran and the applications are coming in. The Pioneer Camp which is for Middle School students, we have shorted the times. Last year it rained every day and the kids got stir crazy being inside all day, we had to send some home and have

the police talk to a few. This year we have activities scheduled from 8am to 1pm, so hopefully we can keep them occupied. During this same time it's the International Mud Day which is a big day out here, lots of children and adults come to play in the mud. We will make a mud mountain, a mud slip-n-slide and of course we make mud pies with the sand toys. This is a free event we don't charge anyone to come play in our mud.

The Friends have agreed to fund 3 campers this year that could not afford the fees, which is great.

The Explorer Camp is for the young kids, we have two camps scheduled this year and they are filling up fast. It will be held in July and these are half a day classes, they are usually well attended.

We added something new this year, we sent Jackie and David to the Wilderness Survival Camps. Jackie went to the Mountains and David went to the Everglades. They learned several things to teach the kids, we won't be teaching them how to skin a rabbit or make jerky, but they will be learning how to purify water, build your own shelter, and the Fire Department is going to come in a teach First Aide and give them a CPR class. This will be an overnight camp out, Jackie, David and a parent will be here, it is scheduled for the end of July. I hope it turns out well, we've gotten so many requests for upper level activities, not just to "teach me something". They want to go in the woods, so we're going to try this and see how it goes.

We are completely booked for the summer and I have had to turn some schools away, because we have to be able to do our regular day to day jobs as well. Zana and the Board praised how good Leslie and the staff are doing with the camps and the children just love coming out here.

Staffing Changes:

The City is requiring my department be split into two departments, Environmental and Nature Parks, due to finances. In the beginning this was a challenge, to split each person into their departments, change the structure and the expenses associated with each. Jackie and I are Environmental due to our background and everyone else is Nature Parks. Angie is scheduling the field trips and programs and Jackie is designing the programs, so they are working together on those. With Jackie and Angie both being out having babies, we had some extra money in the budget. Public Works has been helping us out cutting the grass, but they have to cut the City of Foley grass first then they come out here and cut ours, it will be 2 to 3 weeks before they can get back and cut again, the grass gets so high you can bale hay out here. Another problem we had was when they are cutting the road side, it has so much cogon grass in it, so it's gotten spread all over out here. I talked with the Public Works Director and I was able to hire Don Lowe, he's retired from the City and he's able to work 16 hours a week for us. The City trusts him so they gave us the spare Tractor and large bush hog and now our fields are getting cut every week and they look so much better.

We have two returning Interns, this will be Brodie's third summer working with us, he's in his second year of college in Wildlife and Habitat Management, and I think

he would really like to have a future career with us. He mow's around the Park and has implemented several good projects around the park. Our other intern returning this year received the Wolf Bay Scholarship and he just received his water quality certification so I have him doing all our water quality monitoring and higher level monitoring; he also helps with the field trips. They have both been a tremendous help to all of us.

We are currently working with Public Works on a new personnel request for a Vector Control Specialist, this will be a new position and it will be managed under the Environmental department, they will be doing the mosquito spraying. They have added so many regulations about mosquito spraying, I manage the permits and convey environmental regulations to the City, so that we make sure we are doing what we are required to do, but this has become a full time job. We have one guy working out of Public Works on over time, spraying every day, and he just cannot get it all done.

2019 Projects & Major Purchases

For the budget, I've had to divide it into two budget line items, the Interpretative Center, the grounds around the center and then the rest of the Nature Parks.

One of our major purchases we made last year was purchasing wetland mats we put them on one of the archery ranges to cross the wetlands areas, these mats are used by electric companies to track their large equipment across. We used them on the Big Buck range, the water doesn't flow there but after it rains it get really wet out there. These mats have really helped to get the archeries out where they need to be and also it's become a walking amenity. People are walking out there all the time and the mats help them to feel safe. There are several pitcher plants out there for the people to see. I would like to purchase several more of these mats, and put them on Snake Range, there are several places where the water goes across and these mats will set up on the roots, they allow the water to flow through, they don't float off and they also don't interfere with the native plants. The costs will be around \$3,000 to \$4,000, this is a good investment, they are more substantial then the wooden pallet bridges that we have out there now and these will last several years.

We have 3 port a potties in the park, I think those are sufficient for now.

We will need to purchase some rocks we have lots of ruts that need to be filled in, and rocks are expensive.

Need to do some work for the Creek Crawl, some of the pile wood on the rope wall needs to be replaced, people climb on it all the time. We've received several calls asking us to mark the Creek Crawl course as a trail so they can constantly use it. We are already getting calls from people wanting to register for the Creek Crawl.

The Police Department transferred a boat to us, it doesn't have a motor. However, Public Works has a motor that we think will work, it may have even came off the boat. We've had some concerns when we send people out kayaking or canoeing and there are trees or big limbs down that need to be removed. It

would be easier to do from a boat than a canoe. The question was asked where would you launch the boat, we will go talk to the neighborhood and our Fire Department has a key. This would not happen very often so the Fire Department will probably help us with pulling the boat and getting it launched.

The City hasn't asked about the Capital Plan Updates yet, but completing the ADA Trail is on my list. I would like to add another small pavilion by the archery range and outdoor classroom for birthday parties and the smaller groups that come out here.

Purchase a Front Mower to mow the proper Park and behind the cell phone tower. The big tractor is too heavy to go back there and with the X-Mark it takes all day to mow.

The Interpretive Center is now the voting destination for Mifflin. The day of voting was a challenge with so much traffic on a rainy day, we had 656 people to vote. We had ATV's just going in circles getting people to the center and then back out to their cars, and so many of these people are elderly and can't walk well. I think we pulled it off real well considering this was our first time. We have to get more lighting for the parking lot and coming into the building. The Fire Department brought out their big tower light, which we didn't need at this time, but when they vote in November we will need more lighting. I don't really want any big permanent lighting but checking into getting some solar lights on that side of the parking lot. The Board asked if all the costs were documented, on what it cost the City to have the voting held here. The County should help with the lighting costs and any other costs associated with making this a voting destination.

Other purchases were discussed, Jackie talked to the Chamber about all the programs that have been done out here. The Chamber talked to Riviera Utilities and they cut the Chamber a check and purchased a Home Depot gift card, with that donation we purchased 6 kayaks, paddles, and 12 life jackets. We have two canoes that we purchased last year and we use these to take the smaller kids out in with an adult. Our plan is to use these for summer camps, small events with 12 or less, taking them out and showing them GCNP from the water. Also looking into letting the public register for guided tours on the creek.

Fall Events:

Our fall events will start in September,. The cross country coach has talked about changing dates again, so I don't have those. We have booked a Wedding in early October, which I'm not too crazy about. The second weekend in October is the Shoot-Out, then Cross Country in there somewhere. The Haunted Forest for the last two weekends in October, with Pumpkin Play Day, the College Archery Tournament will overlap those events. The numbers for the Archery Event could be from 250 to 500 archery's, this is a Friday, Saturday, Sunday shoot and there is hardly any work on our part. There are no vendors involved, the company that sponsors this event feeds them and provides entertainment, so again not much work on our part.

We have selected our trail for the Haunted Forest this year, it will start at the boardwalk and go to the south end and down and then curve around to snake range and go back around. For the two days this event made us a large amount of money, approximately \$3,000; then the Wicked Walk made about \$1,000. These are our biggest fundraisers. The Haunted Forest is scheduled for October 19th and 20th, then October 26th and 27th for this year, I have the themes and scary stories selected, that's what makes our event different from the other Halloween events going on. We bring the scary stories to life, like with the Killer Clowns. From the feedback we received, we are going to change the date for the Wicked Walk from Halloween Night to the night before Halloween.

The last big event is the Creek Crawl, it's the third Saturday in November. Last year we had over 200 people out here, and we really weren't prepared for that many. It was well attended and people are already wanting to sign up for next year.

Gulf Coast Archery Contract –

I think I discussed this with the Board, but when ASA had the big shoots out here they donated some 3D targets for us to use to put on smaller shoots here to expose the community to the 3D archery. Several other groups were requesting to use the 3D targets we were trying to figure out who could use them and if they were damaged who would replace. We made the decision to use Gulf Coast Archery, we have worked with them for years and they abide by the same rules as ASA and everything would be covered under ASA insurance. We have three areas that would not interfere with the other archery's, or trails.

Mountain Bike Trails –

The mountain bike group has started working on their trails. They are located right off of Russian Road, where we had the Wicked Walk trails last year, they started there and found dirt. In this area there is no water, no protective plants just invasive plants and old pecan trees. I just wanted to make the board aware of them being out there. There are about 10 or 15 of them and they ride the BMX Bikes, that's why they are building up the dirt to make jumps. They don't need distance they just want the challenge of rough terrain. At some point with the BMX'ers and Disc Golfers using this area, but I want to run a water line and put a pitcher pump out there for them to be able to get water. During events we have a cooler out there for them.

Treasured Forest Designation –

Leslie stated she didn't think we would ever get this designation.

Tommy Patterson used to manage the Treasured Forest Program for years. It started back in the late 1980's with Bill Moody, the State Forester with the Alabama Forestry Commission. Tommy said back then people didn't like or understand what forest management was all about. This was an effort to say that real foresters wanted this as a multi-use forest management program. Which was essentially designed for private land owners, everyone likes to be recognized. There was a

set of criteria that you had to meet to get awarded the Treasured Forest Designation. They had to manage their timber properly, it wasn't for game preserve, we wanted people to hunt and manage the wildlife property and have prescribed burns. If the landowners accomplished all this the Alabama Forestry Commission would recognize them with a plaque and sign. This was to encourage other landowners to see that this person was doing things right and get others to join in on the program.

Tommy asked how this came about for GCNP and Leslie said that Rickey Fields our Baldwin County Forestry Management Specialist with Alabama Forestry Commission recommended that we participate in the program. The application was submitted and approved, so we are now a Treasured Forest Designation. This is exciting for us, another good designation for GCNP.

Recognition for AL Trails Conference & ACE Communities (Video)

We were asked to speak at the Alabama Trails conference today that was really neat, we had the Commission for National Recourses and the National Parks Service wants to work with us on some projects. There were also some representatives from ADECA there and they give out the Recreation Trail Grants. A representative came out and made a field tour and she just couldn't believe all that we've accomplished out here without the big grants. We were able to get it done with City funds and State Lands Grants.

The City was also designated as a Main Street Alabama City and then we've been an Alabama Community for Excellence for several years and they came out here and made a video, that I will show you in a minute, GCNP was shown in it several times. This video will be shown in Welcome Centers all over Alabama.

Tomorrow morning APT – Alabama Public Television is coming out here with Auburn University. They did research out here when the park was just getting started, Wolf Bay Research on headwater wetlands, hoping to get them back out here for more research. We are getting lots of recognition for the GCNP which is great. Our web-site numbers have doubled from last year.

We had several come visit us from the Foley Senior Center that was an exciting day. They toured the Memorial Walk and one lady said that her husband had a tree planted in his memory; she had never seen it. She was in tears when we showed her the tree and plaque.

Meeting Date – To be determined

VISITOR COMMENTS

There were no visitor comments.

ADJOURN

Mr. Phillip Hinesley made a motion to adjourn and Mr. Tommy Patterson seconded the motion. The vote passed unanimously. Hearing no further comments the meeting adjourned at 6:55 p.m.

Brenda W. Shambo/Recording Secretary