

## Friends of Kissimmee Prairie Preserve Draft Meeting minutes 11/19/17

- I. **Call to order.** The meeting was called to order by President Christina Evans at 12:08pm.

### Attendees:

#### CSO

Christina Evans - President  
Tim Kozusko - board member  
Dave Kandz - Secretary  
Paul Gray - board member  
Dave Holko - board member  
Steve Smith - prospective board member  
Shayna Jacques - prospective board member  
Kelly Wiener - prospective board member

#### CSO board members absent

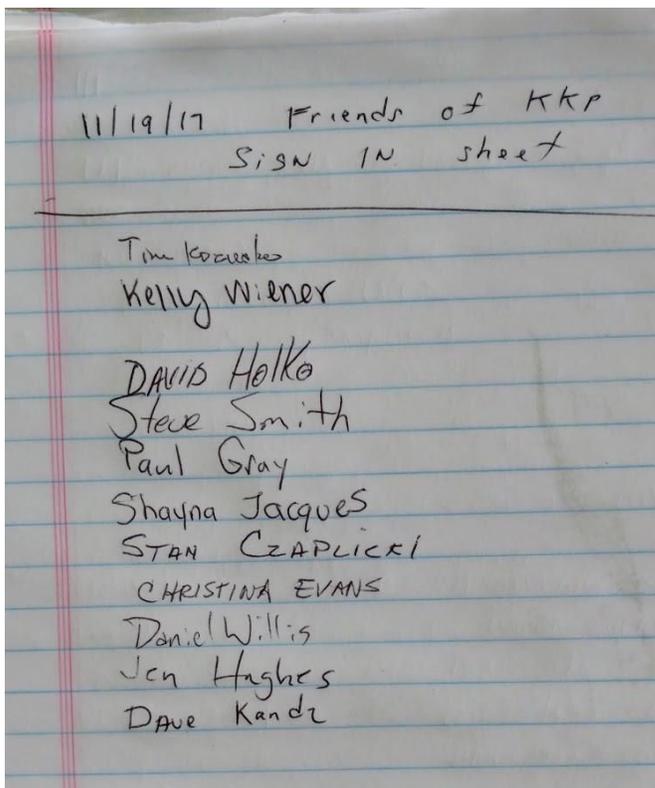
None.

#### Park Personnel

Daniel Willis - KPPSP Manager  
Jen Hughes - Park Biologist  
Katie Ferguson - Park Services Specialist (attended for item VIII-3)

#### Guests:

Stan Czaplicki - visitor



**II. Approval of agenda :** Paul Gray moved approval of the agenda, Dave Holko seconded, agenda was approved with no changes.

Introductions were conducted.

**III. Approval of the August Meeting Minutes:** Tim moved approval of the August 15, 2017 meeting minutes as amended, Dave Kandz seconded, minutes were approved.

**IV. Treasurer's Report :**

Tim read through the statement of cash flows (attached). Christina noted decreased revenue due to:

- (1) ban on firewood sales due to the recent drought and
- (2) the Spring Wildflower walk was cancelled due to a tornado.

Paul requested Paper Pushers (our accounting service) provide a list of definitions which would be helpful in explaining the financial reports; Christina felt they would furnish whatever information we asked for, and also noted we have procedures documented for collecting and processing money. Dave Holko questioned the need to spend money on our accounting service (Paper Pushers); Tim and Christina explained in some detail what they provide for us, and noted the need for a professional accounting service in recruitment of donors.

The price for Wild Apricot (the membership and contact management database) is increasing due to the number of contacts and members exceeding 250; Christina suggested increasing the limit to 500 members resulting in a new price of \$70/month, but with a 10% discount for annual payment. Discussion ensued.....

Broadband Internet is \$65/month, but this is only a temporary arrangement until the State installs a T1 line. Daniel will check with the T1 supplier and report back to the board. Paul noted the staffing level for this KPPSP is 46 which is far above current staffing level; the Friends are making up the difference by funding these "nice to have" items.

(Jen Hughes joined the meeting at 12:27)

Use of phone "hotspot(s)" to provide Internet coverage were discussed; Daniel pointed out the difficulties with this approach and that seasonal employees would not have adequate phone coverage.

Dave Holko moved to boost Wild Apricot to the 500 contact level for a cost of \$70/month with a provision that payment be made in the most cost effective manner; Tim seconded the motion, motion carried.

The Broadband contract was tabled until Daniel contacts the T1 supplier and the status of the contract becomes known.

Daniel had a question re: money being held in our Paypal account. Christina stated the money received for an event is kept in Paypal in case of cancellation; after the event the money is moved into our checking account.

Recycling bins located by the dumpster were lost in hurricane Irma. Natalie is looking for a recycling service. The prior system of driving the contents to the county provided site, only to find the site is full and then having to store the recycling material is not cost-effective.

## **V. Membership Report:**

As of 11/16/17 we have 86 active members. Our Facebook page has 865 “likes”. Various methods of converting “likes” into members were discussed, including: free park passes, a Dave Simpson guided bird walk, and free buggy tours.

Christina suggested forming a membership committee, but as we don't yet have enough confirmed board members it was decided to skip ahead in the agenda to the board membership discussion (item **VIII.1**).

## **VIII. New Business**

Paul would like to see a better defined Board structure and also local groups represented on the board. Okeechobee historical society representation would be helpful. Paul proposed the following Board categories: conservation, astronomy, hiking, and local. After discussion equestrian, birding, photography, and herpetologists were added to the category list.

### **1. Election of board members**

The proposed candidates are: Shayna Jacques, Kelly Wiener, Marie Figueroa, Steve Smith and Charlie Venuto. Marie and Charlie were unable to attend today's meeting, but both indicated they are willing to serve on the Board. Each candidate was introduced and gave a brief overview of their background and interests. Paul described Marie's background and Tim related some biographical information on Charlie. Paul Gray moved to accept the slate of proposed candidates, Dave Holko seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

### **2. Board officer elections - Treasurer position**

The slate of officers proposed is : Christina Evans (President), Tim Kozusko (Vice-President), Dave Kandz (Secretary), Shayna Jacques (Treasurer). Shayna had several questions re: responsibilities of the treasurer, which were answered. Paul Gray moved to accept the slate of officers, Tim Kozusko seconded. The slate was approved unanimously.

At this point we resumed the agenda at:

## **VI. Manager's report**

Daniel Willis: The statewide manager's meeting was recently held in Orlando. At the meeting, DEP leadership was announced. Eric Draper (formerly Executive Director of Florida Audubon) is now Director of the Park Service. Noel Valenstein is the DEP Secretary, the Deputy Secretary is David Clark, who has a primary focus of getting back to the park's mission. Parks Small (former Kissimmee Prairie Park Manager) is now the Assistant Director and reports to Eric. Daniel was very encouraged by the DEP/Parks leadership and their knowledge about the Prairie.

Daniel attended the Florida Grasshopper Sparrow working group meeting in Ocala. The group approves of current Land Management practices (Avon Park Sparrow numbers bottomed out and have subsequently increased), but issues remain with water, fire ants, and pathogens.

Fire council meeting was held last week. Fire season for 2018 should be very similar to last year with a warmer and drier winter, punctuated with periodic freezes which will frost-cure the fuels. An open fire ban is likely starting in May 2018 (like last year). KPP is trying to reach their 27K acre goal before any ban goes into place and keep the fire return interval to a 1-2 year range.

The Park is currently advertising for Americorps workers who will start in February. One campground host is interested and a Sebastian Inlet person may come over. Americorps is a good way to get paid experience and housing for workers is provided.

Sparrow Technicians are being hired and will be funded one way or another.

A new Equestrian campground bathhouse is moving forward, currently at 60% construction planning phase. Ground breaking is scheduled for April or at latest May 2018; the bathhouse will be operational in fall 2018.

Recycling took a hit with hurricane Irma; county recycling site dumpsters are often full, so recycling material must be stored on-site, but then bees/wasps are attracted to the materials and plastic storage bags break down. Therefore the recycling program is currently on hold. The Park is looking for a single stream recycling service which would provide a separate dumpster for recycling.

Okeechobee Christmas parade to be held on December 9<sup>th</sup> at night. The park is entering (as a float) the fire buggy towing an airboat and trailer behind it. The float will be decorated with lights & banners advertising the Park and Friends groups. Theme will be "misfit toys". Christina to send Paul a high quality banner image.

Park has \$50K worth of road material (lime rock fill) drying out and some Irma related roof projects funded through FEMA.

Paul Gray asked about the 10 year Unit Management Plan. Daniel replied they are waiting on a timber assessment to be finalized before sending the plan to the ARC committee for approval in December. The UMP's "natural component" includes dark skies as a protected resource, thus allowing the Park to make rules to protect it. For example, a sign is currently

posted specifying rules for the astronomy pad sites, and the equestrian bathhouse will have features to protect the “dark sky” natural resource.

## **VII. Unfinished/continuing business**

Bunkhouse: Paul provided some background -- when Audubon sold their 7,000 acres to the State of Florida to be combined with other acreage to form the Kissimmee Prairie Preserve State Park, a permanent endowment was created. This endowment included a signed agreement returning 30% of endowment proceeds to the Preserve to fund projects which would not otherwise be funded. For 20 years that money has been accumulating, and there is now enough to build a Bunkhouse housing visiting workers and researchers.

Audubon is looking for a “pass-through” organization to funnel money through, or they can deal directly with the contractor. Paul recommends a direct approach, and Christina and Dave Holko don’t feel the Friends should be responsible for a bunkhouse. Paul will report the Friends position back to Audubon.

**1. Second PA system for buggy** We purchased the original system last year and it has worked very well. The Park would like a second system. Tim moved to “purchase and provide another headset and bluetooth speaker system”, Steve seconded the motion. After some discussion the motion passed unanimously.

**2. Bimini top for the swamp buggy:** Daniel has a bimini frame but, its too large (8 feet); he needs a 6 to 6.5 foot frame. Dave Holko to get a price on a frame (4 bow frame is preferable, 3.5 feet or taller) and canvas week after Thanksgiving.

**3. PDPN meeting date:** Teleconference will be held December 9<sup>th</sup> at 1pm in the afternoon. Paul will set up the call using a free conference call service. This is same day as the Christmas parade.

**4. Ideas to honor Buck/Linda Cooper** Various ideas were brought up including a sculpture or sundial (placed on NE side of office where picnic tables are now) or a painting / mural by artist Kim Heise, possibly featuring a Pine Lily which is pollinated by Eastern Black Swallowtail butterflies (inside the office). Paul to look for ideas online, anyone else feel free to provide suggestions. Christina will contact Kim Heise.

## **5. Other unfinished business**

## **VIII. New Business** (starting with item 3)

**3. LIFE education program (Learning In Florida’s Ecosystems)** : Background info - Friends of Florida State Parks is spearheading implementation of this program (see <https://friendsoffloridastateparks.org/FFSP-LIFE-Program>) in State Parks and the Friends are hoping KPPSP will be one of them. Katie and Christina attended a workshop last month, and Christina sent some information to Tim. Christina passed around some literature and handouts from the workshop. A number of existing programs such as Project WILD are

available. Our part as a Friends/CSO group would be to find an interested school or teacher to partner with. Tim will head up an education committee to implement a LIFE program.

**4. Wells:** Kelly Wiener - The Florida Trail Association (FTA) received a grant from the REI co-op for pitcher pump installations. The pitcher pumps will be used to supply non-potable water for hikers, who will purify the water before drinking it. Two spots that need pumps are (1) Cowboy Crossing camp and (2) the Northernmost boundary fence along the recent levee breach. Daniel would like to increase the well size from 2 inches in diameter to 4 inches to make the wells usable for fire suppression, but that will cost an additional \$2610.00. Daniel explained the benefits to the Preserve of 4 inch wells vs 2 inch, and requested the Friends pay the additional cost. Tim moved to allocate \$2610 to increase the capacity of two wells from 2" to 4". Dave Holko seconded the motion. Funds must be spent by end of year 2017; Friends would write a check to FTA, with a cover letter stating what the check is for. Motion passed unanimously.

Well locations : (1) Cowboy Crossing and (2) near waypoint 34-6



## 5. CSO Annual Program Plan for 2018:

Dates for CSO Events:

- 1<sup>st</sup> day hike - Jan 1
- Prairie Days and Prairie Nights - Feb 17th
- Okeechobee Battlefield Reenactment - Feb 24-25
- Spring Wildflower Walk - April 21
- Fall Wildflower Walk - October (tentative)
- Special buggy tours (date tbd)
- Astronomy program - December 1 with CSO membership drive
- Fire demonstration (date tbd)

## IX. Comments, Announcements

Jen: Viking Estates property owners have a Facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/groups/PrairieHomeOwners/> - Jen has access to post fire warnings, burn notifications etc.

Dave Holko: Astronomy pad campsites are for people setting equipment, but dark skies are visible everywhere throughout the park.

Paul: Announcement - Governor and Cabinet Approve Florida Forever Acquisition of Nearly 6 square miles of Triple Diamond Ranch, to be part of Everglades Headwaters National Wildlife Refuge. See: <https://content.govdelivery.com/accounts/FLDEP/bulletins/1b140ff> for more info.

Filmmaker filming at Okeechobee battlefield event; wants to get footage of the battle and of soldiers "thrashing around in the mud".

Friends Board Meeting dates for 2018 :

- Feb 18<sup>th</sup> (Sunday after PDPN) - noon
- April 21 (day of spring wildflower walk) - 4pm
- August 11<sup>th</sup> - 2pm in office
- Dec 1<sup>st</sup> - noon

There being no other business Dave Kandz moved to adjourn, Tim seconded the motion and the meeting was adjourned at 3:37pm.

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