

Friends of Pine Grove Furnace Board Meeting

Minutes for May 14th, 2016

Board in attendance: A. Weltman (chair), M. Soderberg (vice-chair), B. Breen (treasurer), D. Velozo (secretary); S. Breen, S. Dodd, R. Shaw, J. Burleigh; and Park Manager J. Basil (*ex officio* member) and Park Environmental Educator A. Smith.

Park Manager's comments

- The park's Spring programs have been successful: for example, Earth Day had 77 volunteers, Woodsy Owl weekend 53 volunteers, and ten people showed up for Lea's amphibian hike despite bad weather.
- Work started (during Woodsy Owl weekend) on a "Nature Discovery Area" -- a nature-themed playground -- adjoining Laurel Lake. Similar special playgrounds exist in other State Parks, such as Nolde Forest S.P. A focused volunteer work morning for this project is planned for June 4th. The Park Manager requested that the Friends purchase a specific small plastic slide for the area costing approximately \$100 -- vote unanimous to obtain at Lowes or Home Depot. (Note: this item was later obtained by our treasurer from Home Depot in Carlisle for \$75, a significant discount over the list price.)
- The Friends purchased a small folding table to facilitate the park EE's outdoor programs.

Treasurer's report

- Our current balance is almost \$37,000 (a detailed report is available upon request). As noted in previous meeting minutes, a large fraction of the money on hand will be used in 2016 for the Mountain Creek Trail project. We will have to "front" the money to buy the bridge then be reimbursed by the two grants, so we need to have a large balance on hand into the summer.
- Income so far this year includes \$750 from firewood sales.
- Several memorial donations are expected in memory of local cabin owners. We are grateful that their memories will be honored by donations to improve the park and support programming.

Merchandise

- As previously discussed, we ordered the annual embroidered patch for 2016 showing "Boating at Laurel Lake." The order of 300 patches arrived and has very attractive stitching. It looks even better up close than it does in photographs.
- The Board voted to order 100 enamel pins, similar to our previous pins based on the 2013 patch but replacing the words "100th anniversary 1913-2013" with "Pennsylvania." The top wording remains the name of the park, and the central image is the furnace stack. Of 200 old-style pins previously ordered, only around a dozen remain for sale. We will sell the new pins for \$5, resulting in not quite \$2 profit per pin.
- We will order more children's T-shirts, new "medallions" for walking sticks, and a new design of hooded sweatshirt. We will restock other items including hats, which sell well -- the back room supply is very low.

Social media and advertising

- The Friend's Facebook page is very active. Non-Facebookers can see material on our Facebook page, but sometimes intrusive ads appear (which we cannot control).
- We will maintain our website www.PineGroveFriends.org which in some ways has become a supporting mechanism for material on Facebook, including website attachments such as various brochures and race maps; plus the website remains a resource for non-Facebookers. Our webmaster Josh will use Google to track the number of clicks on the website so we can better understand how it is used.

Mountain Creek Trail project

- Trail work continues with highly successful volunteer efforts during Earth Day and Woodsy Owl: we achieved significant improvements in several problem areas along the trail. We now need to coordinate with special-interest groups such as hiking/trail associations and the Michaux Forest Association, to continue the non-bridge trail improvements through the summer.
- A member of MFA has offered his assistance including a small boom truck to move rocks to the trailhead. Our Park Manager will allow us to use a Board member's four-wheeler with a trailer to move rocks from the edge of Old Railroad Bed Road to a problematic small-stream crossing. The four-wheeler is narrow enough to get down this section of trail, and if run slowly will cause less environmental disturbance than any other practical method of moving the heavy rocks. We will plan a rock-moving-and-installing work day, probably the weekend of the MFA picnic (June 25-26).
- As previously noted, we were successful in getting two mini-grants which must be spent in 2016: from Cumberland County Visitors Bureau for \$21,730 and from South Mountain Partnership for \$15,000. These

two grants complement each other in terms of “matching funds,” but must be accompanied by Friends’ money as well as volunteer hours “monetized” using a standard formula.

- DCNR work on permits from DEP is in progress, and we received blueprints for a girder bridge (made from lightweight fiberglass so that it is easy to carry and install).
- The 55-foot bridge across Mountain Creek will be installed in the Fall when conditions are best along the stream banks. We need pre-cast footers plus geotextiles and stones for stream banks; the park will assist with ordering these materials and paying for them.

Firewood

- Cabin owners continue to donate local wood, often already bucked and split, for our sales at the Family Campground (a major source of Friends income). We are grateful for this ongoing support.
- A splitting and stacking session will be next weekend (May 21). We need to fill the campground shed with dry wood to get ready for Memorial Day weekend and increased campsite use. It appears that more and more people are turning to camping, perhaps for the first time, as an inexpensive way to have a family vacation.

Earth Day (April 23) and Woodsy Owl volunteer weekend/free camping (May 13-14-15)

- The Friends hosted successful pot-luck lunches for both park events.
- As noted above, large numbers of volunteers turned up and much work was accomplished around the park, including on Mountain Creek Trail. Other tasks included improving Brickyard Trail, planting trees at Laurel Lake parking area and elsewhere, and mulching the flower beds in front of the office.

Iron Run half-marathon and Charcoal Challenge 5k run/walk (June 11)

- Online registration is at www.runReg.com/6245 for the half-marathon, or www.RunReg.com/6246 for the 5k. The deadline for pre-registration lower fees and a guaranteed race shirt was May 18. At this time we have just over 200 people registered, as many as we had for the entire event in 2015. With late on-line and same-day registrations, we can expect to easily exceed the size and income of last year’s races.
- Race planning is going well. Maps for both races are now on our website. The volunteer schedule, coordinated by Diane, is mostly set up.
- We received donations including gift cards from local supermarkets. Appalachian Running Company in Carlisle will again be our title sponsor and we expect gift cards from them for race winners.
- Pre-race setup and course marking will be Friday, June 10.

Fall Furnace Fest 2016 (October 15-16)

- A planning meeting April 17 focused on volunteer coordination, always a major task for such a large event.
- PPF arranged for a statewide “promoter’s license” instead of each park Friend’s group enduring the laborious administrative process of obtaining a license for each major public event such as our Fall Fest.

PA Parks & Forests Foundation update

- PPF’s new “Stewards of Penn’s Woods” program started with cleanup activities at Hammonds Rocks and two other nearby Michaux Forest vistas. A huge amount of trash, including tires, was removed from the woods by volunteers on April 16. (Graffiti removal on May 21 had to be rescheduled due to weather.)

Free display/sales tables at community events

- We had successful sales/promotions tables at a community event on the Army War College campus in Carlisle and a “Healthy Adams County Physical Fitness Task Force” community event in Gettysburg.

Park schedule for 2016

- Below is the schedule of major Friends and volunteer events for 2016. In addition, Friends chairman Andre will begin his usual schedule of history walks & tours, starting Memorial Day weekend with a Saturday 10 AM furnace walking tour and Sunday 3 PM tour inside the Ironmaster’s Mansion.

- Iron Run half-marathon & Charcoal Challenge 5k run/walk: **Saturday June 11** (2nd Saturday of month)
- National Public Lands Day, with potluck lunch for volunteers: **Saturday September 24**
- Fall Furnace Fest: **October 15-16** (3rd weekend of month)

NEXT BOARD MEETING is scheduled for August 20th