

# Friends of Pine Grove Furnace Board Meeting

*Minutes for January 14<sup>th</sup>, 2017*

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

## **Friends administration**

- Board members voted for the current leadership.
- Volunteers are reminded to enter their hours into the DCNR website. Tracking the number of volunteers and their time contribution through the year is important in many ways to DCNR and to PPF.
- The PPF annual report draft was distributed and briefly reviewed.

## **Park Manager comments**

- New manager Mike Kutzmonich reported that the park is assisting the Ironmaster's Mansion with routine functions (electric bill, grass cutting).
- Work continues on the new bathroom building in the group campground. The old one will eventually be removed after the new one is operational.

## **Treasurer's report**

- Our current balance is \$55,895 (a detailed report is available upon request). Grant reimbursement added a considerable amount to our account as we enter 2017.
- The Board briefly discussed the PPF online process for credit card donations. It would be helpful if the purpose of donations was always made clear.

## **Budget**

- The Board reviewed actual and expected budget numbers for the past few years. We anticipate that \$45,000 of currently unallocated funds will be available for projects in 2017-2018.

## **Merchandise**

- We are well stocked with items appropriate for the cold-weather season.
- A limited number of a new item, magnets in the shape of deer, bears, and hummingbirds plus park name, will be ordered. While we don't want to overload the Park Office store area with too many things, these are small and easily displayed. We will sell it for \$5, an easy round number, for a profit of roughly \$3 each.

## **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.
- The vent in the top of the shed was finally installed, for only \$60 – we are grateful to the contractor for the excellent low price.
- The shed is now very full of wood in anticipation of the camping season starting in a few more months.
- Our Park Manager proposed that the Friends install a small locked shed at the splitting area on Fuller parking to allow us easy access to our power splitter, wheelbarrows and tools. Bill will review size and cost.

## **Social media and advertising**

- The Friend's Facebook page is very active. Thanks to Mary for keeping up with the content.
- Rob drafted the Winter newsletter – edits are underway.

## **First Day Hike**

- The event from Laurel Lake along the new Mountain Creek Trail and Old Railroad Bed Road was very successful with 110 attendees and perfect weather. The Board agreed to host it again next year; we will have to decide whether to repeat the same route, or alternate each year between the Laurel Lake area and the Fuller Field-hiker-biker or Koppenhaver area.
- Holding other regularly organized Friends hikes during the year was mentioned, but discussion was tabled for now.

### **Mountain Creek Trail project**

- Bridge steps are in place and trail re-routes completed. The bridge still needs a flood-restraint cable which was purchased using grant money, and will be installed by Park Maintenance.
- To satisfy grant requirements, we are drafting a public brochure on “hiking and wildlife watching in the Laurel Lake area”. It will need final approval by the two grant agencies, and DCNR. Some of the brochures will be translated into Spanish.
- We will hold a formal opening event with press release on Earth Day 2017.
- No update was available on this item from our last meeting: “Unknown person(s) installed a very nicely designed 10-foot wooden walkway along Mountain Creek Trail (near the Camp Thompson end). It has heavy wood components and an antiskid surface. This walkway is “overbuilt” for this rustic trail, and covers up perfectly satisfactory stepping stones recently installed by an experienced volunteer with our permission as part of the overall trail project. The park will try to identify the source of this extra walkway, which is thoughtful but not needed, and have them remove it. Perhaps it could find a useful home on another trail, for example the blue trail near Camp Michaux.”

### **Small Games of Chance**

- It is unclear if the Friends, as a non-profit, will be allowed to hold a raffle during some future Fall Furnace Fest. The first step, a ballot proposal for Cooke Township residents under the Commonwealth’s “local option” law, is expected this year. There are many other hurdles, and final approval must come from the Bureau of Parks and our Park Manager and PPF. The Board will also need to decide if holding raffles is worth the administrative hassles, despite the expectation that raffles can raise a lot of money.

### **Annual embroidered patch**

- The Board voted that this year’s image will be the 1870 brick chapel along Pine Grove Road.

### **Iron Run half-marathon and Charcoal Challenge 5k, June 10, 2017**

- Registration will be set up on [www.RunReg.com](http://www.RunReg.com) at the end of January.
- The Board agreed to hire Pretzel City Sports for more professional timing. Though they are more expensive, we need reliable services for this ever-growing event.
- The start of the 5k will be 8:30 instead of 8 AM, to allow more time for registration. The timer does not recommend we start the 5k any later (such as 9 AM) due to overlap with half-marathoners at the finish line.

### **Future projects**

- We began to discuss possible major projects. Ideas include improved connections between hiking trails in the campground-furnace stack side of the park.
- The Park Manager proposed the Friends contribute an estimated \$9,000 for widening the exit of the family campground (and turning it into a combined entrance/exit, in addition to the existing entrance further south along Bendersville Road; the Board voted to do so.
- The Board also agreed to contribute up to \$2,000 towards improving the walkway in front of the Office.
- The electronic public address equipment in the Fuller guard shack is not reliable and needs replacement. We also asked whether a telephone line from the “free public payphone” can be extended into that building, which would open up the potential for credit card sales during Fall Fest.

#### ***Key dates for 2017***

- Earth Day – Saturday April 22
- Woodsy Owl weekend – Friends lunch on Saturday May 20
- Iron Run – June 10 (2<sup>nd</sup> Saturday in June)
- National Public Lands Day – Saturday Sept 30
- Fall Fest – Oct 21-22 (3<sup>rd</sup> full weekend of October)

***NEXT BOARD MEETING March 11, 2017.***