

NATURE CENTERS COMMISSION

Thomas Center, Bldg A, Room 204
302 NE 6th Ave

March 10, 2016
Thursday – 6:30PM

MINUTES

I. Call to Order and roll call.

Members Present	Members Absent	Staff Present
Amy Carpus	Mary Held	Geoff Parks
Grace Crummer	Leslie Straub (PR)	
Kathy Ewel, Secretary		
Andrew Kratter		
Rupa Lloyd, Treasurer		
Krissy Olson		
Charlie Pedersen, Chair (POL)		
Jon Reiskind, Vice-Chair (POL)		
Taylor Stein (POL)		
Penny Weber (PR)		

II. Agenda Approval

<u>Motion by:</u> Amy Carpus	<u>Seconded by:</u> Jon Reiskind
<u>Moved to:</u> Approve agenda	<u>Upon vote:</u> Passed unanimously

III. Approval of Minutes of February 11, 2016

<u>Motion by:</u> Jon Reiskind	<u>Seconded by:</u> Amy Carpus
<u>Moved to:</u> Approve minutes with correction of name in Board Comments: Taylor Stein talked with Wells the Losen rather than Willie the Losen about lighting for the Gainesville Downtown Connector in the Depot Park section.	<u>Upon vote:</u> Passed unanimously

IV. Chair Report

Mary Held, Penny Weber, and Charlie Pedersen attended the Friends of Nature Parks board meeting at Morningside Nature Park. Charlie will not be able to attend the Chairs Meeting in 2 weeks, at which acquisition policies will be discussed. Jon Reiskind will go in his stead. NCC must be trained again regarding the Sunshine Law because we have so many new members; this will be covered at the retreat. One item frequently mentioned is that no informal discussions with other members regarding board business are permitted; also, notices of meetings must be posted.

V. Treasurer's Report

Rupa Lloyd said that pending receipt of expenses on the volunteer recognition event we are likely to have well over \$4000 to spend. Geoff said the list of possible items requested by staff for purchased is forthcoming. Also, Leslie Straub had prepared a list of items needed for outreach last fall. NCC would like to have the lists early enough, preferably at the retreat, for funds to be spent by the first week of September.

VI. PRCA Staff Report

Geoff Parks mentioned several natural resource items in the staff report. Prescribed burns were carried out at Morningside Nature Center and Boulware Springs State Park. Attendance at Sweetwater Wetlands Park continues to increase. Some of the trail surfaces at Sweetwater have been retrofitted with finely crushed concrete and rolled to comply with American Disability Act requirements. The Gainesville Greenway Challenge, which now has a fulltime staff person, has had its first work day. Plans for Phase 2 of Hogtown Creek Headwaters Nature Park are being revised. A playground, picnic pavilion, and other recreational amenities will be put in. Contractors from Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission will be spraying invasive plants at Hogtown Creek Headquarters and Loblolly Woods. The opening event for the Cofrin Park has been delayed, but the park is nevertheless open for visitation. The Department of Juvenile Justice wants to adopt Duval Park for young people who have to do community service work. Environmental education staff are working with probation officers on ways to enrich the work experience. There will be a workday, including lunch, on April 8. Discussions for formalizing the partnership with Alachua Audubon Society, which is doing weekly bird walks at Sweetwater Wetlands Park are ongoing.

Regarding staff positions: The City Arborist's Maintenance Worker position will be hired soon to assist with tree planting. A Nature Assistant position for Natural Resources is open: it is full time but with no benefits. A Natural Resource Management position is being reevaluated for taking on a supervisory role with maintenance workers and may become a new position. Geoff said that a list of positions lost has been provided to the City Commission. The budget process is underway, and a request has been put in for more positions. The tree inventory contract is being finalized, and the Environmental Education staff is getting ready for the summer program. A new shed will be built at Morningside, perhaps in conjunction with the park's 40th anniversary.

Repairs to the Northeast Pool are underway; it may reopen in early April. Proclamation for recipients of volunteer awards will be March 17 at 5:30 in the commission chambers. The budget cycle this year is for one year.

Geoff summarized water quality issues at nature parks as requested. Last year, many people did not realize that there were significant bacterial issues in water bodies at some parks. Better education about public health threats is needed, as well as about off-trail use causing trampling and creating gaps in fences and spur trails. NCC recommended last year that staff work with other agencies on outreach. A press release last summer stated that some waters were classified as impaired and were not appropriate for bathing. The media covered this issue as though this were newly discovered. Signs put up at both ends of the trail at Loblolly Woods regarding the presence of fecal bacteria in creek resulted in many visits and calls. Measurements by the Alachua County Health Department show that while there are some point sources, such as sewage leakages and septic tanks, both animals and people using the creek may be sources as well. Bacteria may also persist in sediments and be re-suspended, so getting below critical levels may be difficult. Only bacteria important to human health are monitored, so other environmental effects are unknown. Staff will continue working with the Alachua County

Environmental Protection Department as well as with summer camps that bring groups to the creeks. Taylor suggested that permanent signs with more information might be helpful. Geoff responded that they hope to do that although not immediately.

VII. Committee Reports

- a. Policy: Will be covered in Old Business
- b. PR & Awards: This committee has not met. Charlie Pedersen asked them to resurrect their wish list before the retreat.

VIII. Liaison Reports

- a. Bicycle & Pedestrian Board: no report
- b. Recreation & Open Space Advisory Board
Taylor Stein reported that the minutes from the last meeting included discussions about moving the fairgrounds, whether or not to renovate the auditorium, and the new tax to be voted on.
- c. Recreation, Cultural Affairs and Public Works Committee
Geoff Parks reported that this group is working on policy such as issuing trespass warnings, for people who have violated rules in the parks, primarily for the plaza. Rupa asked if there were any plans for basketball courts? Geoff doesn't know, but they should be indicated in the master plan. He said that Greentree Park may build a new basketball court when Girls Place's multiuse field eliminates the current one.

IX. Friends of Nature Parks Report

Penny Weber reported that elections for 2016-17 were held on Feb. 20 at the annual meeting. There was a very good turnout for the event afterwards. The plant sale is scheduled for April 22-23.

X. Old Business

- a. Tree Ordinance: Charlie reviewed the interest in rewriting the tree ordinance. One public hearing has been held, and another is scheduled for March 30 at the GRU main administration building at 5 pm. After that meeting, appropriate responses such as writing a letter can be considered at the retreat.

- b. PRCA policy review:

The committee read through 10 policies. There were no comments on 7.2 (Development of areas and facilities), 7.3 (Defense against encroachment), 7.5.3 (Recycling), Geocaching, Disposition of Conservation Lands, the sign policy for Gainesville parks, and the Sweetwater wetlands park event policy.

- i. 7.1 (Acquisition of conservation lands): This was an existing policy that has changed dramatically in focus and therefore in text based on decisions of the City Commission, which wanted to expand an existing trust fund used for buying conservation land to include parks and cultural affair sites as well. More substantive recommendations include listing land ranking criteria from the disposition ordinance as an appendix. Extensive rewriting has been recommended. Staff is asked to incorporate those changes so that NCC can go over it more effectively.

- ii. 7.8 (Natural resource management and environmental stewardship). In the second paragraph of Procedures, the subcommittee recommended changing the frequency of creating and updating land management plans for all actively managed nature parks from “every 5 years” to ‘every 10 years.’ Changing management plans with that high a frequency is not realistic for the staff to accomplish meaningfully. Krissy Olson felt that 10 years was a long time between actions such as inventories, Geoff pointed out that many monitoring activities, such as for listed species, are ongoing, but it takes time to pull everything together. Of the 28 parks, 10-15 require management plans; some, such as Loblolly Woods and Palm Point, do not have management plans; the plan for Morningside needs to be revised. Preparing a plan is a time-consuming process, requiring lots of maps, ground work, revisiting old files and historic documents, etc.: the better part of a year, given staff’s other responsibilities. Rupa pointed out that with a 10-year cycle, 1-2 plans per year would still have to be prepared. Kathy and Charlie suggested that some kind of review or audit after 5 years could be useful in identifying emerging issues. Amy suggested rewriting the first sentence in the second paragraph under Procedures to indicate that a plan would be updated every 10 years with a review after 5 years. This would be a policy change.
- iii. Memorials for public places and parks policy: The name and address are wrong; staff is asked to fix this. [A mail stop or mail station is an internal site for US mail distribution.]

<u>Motion by:</u> Taylor Stein	<u>Seconded by:</u> Krissy Olson
<u>Move to:</u> Approve the discussion of the Policy Committee	<u>Upon vote:</u> Passed unanimously

XI. New Business

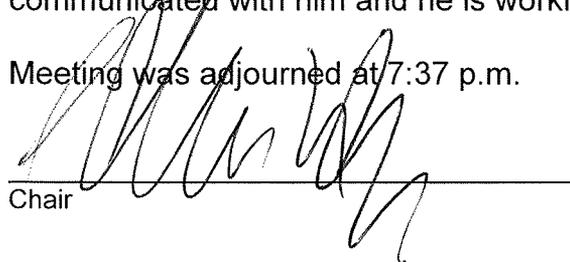
a. Plan Annual Retreat: The NCC will meet in the basement at 5:30 p.m. on April 14. The menu will include veggie pizza and salad with chicken, with onions on the side, plus cannoli for dessert, from Paisanos.

XII. Board comments

Amy Carpus asked if Linda had checked on the lighting issue at the Gainesville Downtown Connector where it passes through Depot Park. Taylor said she communicated with him and he is working with Wells the Losen.

Meeting was adjourned at 7:37 p.m.

Chair



Date

4-19-2016