



## Friends of Weedon Island Inc.

July 8, 2021

Board Meeting @ 6PM

Center Classroom

### AGENDA

**Call to Order:** Bill Fehring called the meeting to order at 6:05 PM. In attendance at the meeting were Emma Mason, Patti Smoot, Tom Muntz, Christine Foley, Carla Garbin, and, by Zoom, Bret Jahn. Representing the County: Joan Landis and, by Zoom, Stephanie Pego. Representing Sensing Nature, Jeanne Murphy and Brian Lane.

**Welcome and Introductions:** Bill welcomed everyone and introduced Weedon's newest staff person, Joan Landis, who will be coordinating the volunteers as well as Brian and Jeanne Lane, from Sensing Nature.

**Approval of Minutes from March 12, 2020 and April 19, 2021 Meetings:** Patti moved to accept the minutes as presented and Emma seconded. Motion passed unanimously.

**Review of Annual Report and President Updates:** Bill discussed the Annual Report he prepared for the County A copy is attached.

**County/Preserve Update:** Stephanie updated everyone on the status of the exhibit hall update.

- The canoe will stay in place rather than being moved into the exhibit hall.
- The consultant fee is greater than anticipated, and the design plan is being revised. Because of it being more expensive than anticipated, the County plans to take on more of the responsibility for various aspects. Any update probably won't occur until late 2022 or 2023.
- A new supervisor has been chosen for the Center. She will be focused on in-house programming plus other administrative tasks.
- Joan reported on the virtual programming that Friends supports financially. The summer camp programs offered through Sensing Nature were the only summer camps offered. Additionally,, Sensing Nature has been hosting virtual family programming twice monthly that has been very popular. The Weedon Island Preserve is always the focus of the programming. We have even had international people attend some of the webinars. Additionally, Stephanie has hosted a series of virtual natural resource programs using monies from the Friend's grant to UF Extension and Joan started offering a program she developed covering the cultural history and one that also focuses on environmental issues. Libby Carnahan added a virtual program on hurricanes.
- Joan has been successful at attracting new volunteers. YEA!

## Standing Committee Reports:

- **Financial Status and FY 22 Budget Process:** Bret reviewed the balance sheet and compared our financial position to last year's. Bottom line, it's looking good and although Covid and the elimination of the Gopher Weedon Run had a negative impact on new revenues, the increase in our investments made up for those losses. Prior to the next meeting a budget meeting needs to be held to prepare for FY2022. Tom, Christine, Carla, Bill, Patti, and Emma agreed to meet with Bret to plan the budget in August.
- Bill explained how Friends is interacting with the County and credited Stephanie with promoting the Friends in the County's communications..
- **Virtual Education and Summer Camps:** Utilizing a slide show, Brian reviewed the success of FY2021 virtual programming that was funded by Friends. Nineteen presentations were offered with 1,300 attendees. Jeanne compared that to what we had been supporting pre-pandemic: Field Trips, including transportation, for 700-900 students each year. Once Covid happened, Sensing Nature pivoted, putting its public programs, including 3 summer camps, on-line. Salt-water fishing camp will be offered in-person. Brian and Jeanne received excellent feedback from parents that the camps, even virtually, were offered. They were pleased that some kids would even sign in early so they could share what they were doing. Beginning in the new year, Sensing Nature offered additional online programs, including 4 specialty programs, where kids received active materials to work on. These programs have really done well also. All of the programs can be switched to be "in-person." Sensing Nature is also offering Tuesday and Saturday programs with a teacher packet for each program to support the teachers. This program will be offered to Title 1 school teachers. Hoping to start up regular field trips in the fall, but it's questionable.. Brian expects that it will take some time to get the schools back into the in-person programs. He has been working with private bus companies to get the best pricing once the field trips can begin. He reported that they have developed a really good turn-out in the past for the in-person field trips and they see a cross-over with field trip kids attending summer camps, etc.
- **Gift Shop:** Patti is continuing with the re-building of the gift shop. She plans to ask the desk volunteers to keep a list of suggestions for new items. She is also bringing in new tee shirts. Her sales goal for the remainder of the fiscal year has been based on 2019 sales and early 2020 numbers. She reminded us that Friends took over the gift shop in 2011. Since then we've sold over \$76K of product. From mid-April when the Center reopened to the end of June, sales reached almost \$900. When the exhibit hall update is happening she would like additional lighting in the gift shop as well as shades for the windows to prevent sun damage. She would also like to create a kids zone that would make adult items more accessible.
- **Membership**
  - Carla asked for any recommendations for additional activities, processes, etc. to increase membership

- **Weedon Warriors:** Emma has not received any call-backs. Jim Goodburn has also contacted the Hospital recreation staff that worked with Emma previously and learned that it is unlikely that off-grounds programs like the Weedon Warriors are unlikely to be resumed anytime soon due to Covid-19 concerns.
- **Social Media:** Carla needs an intern or volunteer to manage Friends social media. She is not that person.

#### **New Business**

- Bill asked that a letter be sent to the Rays thanking them for their volunteer clean-up at the Preserve. They picked up 1,100 pounds of garbage. Carla will send the letter. Bill also reported that he sent the president of Brooker Friends suggesting an informal get-together to discuss common interests. He would like to explore ways to work together. All agreed that was great. Patti suggested we could also contact Boyd Hill to learn about fundraisers.
- Bill asked for the next board meeting to be held in late September or October. Bret commented that he will be out of town in early October so the date for the next meeting is September 30 at 6 at the Center and by Zoom.

**Adjournment:** The meeting adjourned at 7:35 PM.



## Friends of Weedon Island, Inc. Annual Report June 2021

### Friends of Weedon Island (FOWI) Goals and Objectives:

**Mission Statement:** We support Weedon Island Preserve through education, preservation, and protection of its habitat, ecology, and cultural history.

### FY2021 Goals:

- Continued financial and organizational support for environmental education opportunities:
  - On-Line Programs
  - School field trips
  - Summer camps
- Continued financial support for Weedon Preserve programs and presentations:
  - On-Line Programs
  - Increased budget for speakers and special events
  - Explore new event opportunities
- AWIARE grant funding and support
- Membership and website growth
- Fund, produce, and implement the *Gulf Islanders: The Weedon Island Story* as an introduction to the history of Weedon Island and the Preserve.
- Coordination with County Staff and Proposed Initiatives for FY21.
  - Staffing recommendations for the Preserve's Center and maintenance.
  - Full time Park Ranger coverage
  - Increased and improved interpretive and directional signage

### COVID-19

In conjunction with State guidelines and County actions due to the coronavirus pandemic, in March 2021 the Friends suspended in-person Board meetings and other in-person activities at the Preserve. On-line Board meetings were initiated in the Fall of 2020. The required Annual Meeting was held on-line on December 10, 2020 and additional on-line meetings resumed in early April 2021. With the reopening of the Center in April 2021, in July we will resume regular in-person and on-line meetings. The Friends look forward to continued support for the many opportunities and programs available at the Weedon Island Preserve as operations return to normal.

## **Friends of Weedon Island (FOWI) Status of Programs:**

### Environmental Education

In accordance with Federal, State, and County requirements and guidelines all school field trips and camps were cancelled from March 2020 through June 2021. However, during this period funding from the Friends supported a robust on-line environmental education program by contracting with Sensing Nature to develop and deliver a total of 19 on-line programs between August 2020 and May 2021 with 1,238 total attendees. In addition, support by the Friends helped the County Extension Service to produce 8 additional education programs with a total of 623 attendees.

With the lifting of most pandemic-related restrictions in June of 2021, the fishing camp has been scheduled for the summer of 2021. The Friends is providing full scholarships for Title I students to attend this program.

### Preserve and Center Improvements

The 15 minute *Gulf Islanders: The Story of Weedon Island* was produced by the Friends in FY 2020. It is available on You Tube and with links on the Friends and County's website and other social media tools. It serves as an introduction to the cultural and natural history of Weedon Island. Due to pandemic restrictions, the movie was not played at the Center until June 2021. The equipment necessary to display the video in the Center's auditorium was purchased and set up by the Friends. Volunteers at the Center invite visitors to view the movie prior to visiting the exhibits and their initial response to volunteers and staff has been uniformly positive. While it cannot be measured, desk volunteers are reporting that visitors are also spending considerably more time in the Center viewing the exhibits than prior to the video.

Over the course of the pandemic restrictions the County, assisted with input from the Friends board, installed numerous replacement and new interpretive signs on the Preserve boardwalks. This signage has received numerous positive comments from visitors for improved visitor education.

The Friends initiated a project in June to better direct visitors from the parking lot to the main doors of the Center. Heron footprints have been painted on the walkways and signs instructing visitors follow those footprints are being installed. Complementing Heron decorations will be added to the main entrance doors.

Members of the Friends board participated in a workshop with the County and their consultant team regarding a major upgrade to the Exhibit Hall and lobby at the Center. Friends members will participate in additional workshops related to this project, which is scheduled to begin construction in FY22.

Members of the Friends board participated in planning activities for a project to test environmental restoration of ditched and drained mangrove areas within portions of the Preserve.

### Gift Shop

The Gift Shop was closed with the Center during the pandemic restrictions. The shop re-opened for business in June and initial sales have been strong. The Friends are updating the inventory and restocking where necessary.

### Weedon Warriors

No Weedon Warrior trips have been conducted since March 2020 due to pandemic-related restrictions at both the Veterans Hospital and the County. The Friends are investigating whether and when the Recreational Therapist program at the hospital wishes to restart the program. Concurrently the Friends Board is also reviewing the availability of volunteers to participate in the program and current training requirements for past and new volunteers.

## **Membership**

Membership/Donations – FOWI presently has 75 regular members. There was a significant drop-off in memberships during the pandemic. The Friends is now instituting, with support from the Center staff, new member recruitment methods. New members are signing up at a rate of about 4 per month and, with a one-on-one approach that the Friends are implementing, we expect that we will get renewal from at least 80% of our FY 2020 membership.

## **Officers for 2020 – 2021 Term**

President:	Bill Fehring
Vice President:	David Bruzek
Secretary:	Carla Garbin
Treasurer:	Bret Jahn

## **Board Members**

Dave Bruzek	Emma Mason
Fletcher Dunn	Don Mastry
Bill Fehring	Tom Muntz
Christine Foley	Karl Rabeneck
Carla Garbin	Patti Smoot
Bret Jahn	

## 2021 Calendar

April 19	Board Meeting (via Zoom)
July 8	Board Meeting (in-person and via Zoom)
October 7 (tentative)	Board Meeting
December (TBD)	Board Meeting
December (TBD)	Annual Meeting of Membership

## Budget

The impact of the Coronavirus pandemic and related restrictions on activities resulted in substantial changes between the FY2019/2020 budgets and the FY2020/2021 budget, including reductions in both income and expenditures. The FY2020/2021 budget included expenditures for on-line education, AWIARE support, volunteer supplies, membership/website development, Center display improvements and maintenance, and outreach opportunities.

<u>Fiscal Year:</u>	<u>2019/2020</u>	<u>2020/2021 (Though 6/15/2021)</u>
Budgeted Income	\$39,050	\$7,550
Budgeted Disbursements:	\$55,075	\$24,865
Actual Income:	\$25,988	\$2,795
Actual Disbursements	\$38,032	\$6,854

Bill Fehring  
President, Friends of Weedon Island

## Friends of Weedon Island, Inc.

Statement of Assets Cash Basis

As of 06/30/2021

### Cash & Cash Equivalents

American Momentum-Operating	\$ 1,954.98	
American Momentum-Preserve	\$ 1,075.27	
American Momentum-MM	\$ 15,432.29	
American Momentum CD#578693	\$ 13,014.40	
<b>Total Cash</b>		<b>\$31,476.94</b>
LPL account original investment 95,000 Evergreen	\$115,000.00	
Plus investment 06/25/14 \$20,000		
Appreciation of fund includes dividends 05/28/21	\$ 25,444.59	
	<u>\$ 140,444.59</u>	(05/28/21)
<b>Total cash and cash equivalents</b>		<b>\$171,921.53</b>
Fund balance 11/30/20 \$165,436.77		
Current increase in fund balance since 11/30/20		\$ 6,484.76

