

February skipped, Mardi Gras time

Friends of the Manchac Greenway Board Meeting MINUTES/NEWSLETTER March 13, 2019 @ Bec's On the Lake, Frenier, LA

ATTENDING:

FMG Board - Frank Neelis, Lisa Williams, Greg Za Maurin, Ben Taylor, Rev. Donald August, Galen Schum and Alma Chasez

FMG Members - Terry Jones (Village @ Port Manchac), Tom Kane (Canoe & Trail Adventure) and Thomas Dumas

Guests - Insa Becel and Gary Salathe (Greater New Orleans Louisiana Iris Society)

MEETING MINUTES:

01/30/19 minutes approved.

FINANCIAL REPORT:

- Alma reported no activity in the account and the balance remains at \$3,030.31, however, two checks recently came in and were yet to be deposited. It was further revealed that membership donations from approximately 20 new members are apparently "stuck" somewhere in the PayPal system and were yet to be credited to our account. This needed to be ironed out.

- Alma made note that our IRS status needed to be renewed and also recommended we replace our Post Office Box in Robert, LA. Galen volunteered to apply for a new box in Laplace.

- Alma announced she will be retiring as Treasurer (and we greatly appreciate her services in this office since the inception of the organization) and Galen will be assuming this position.

SPECIAL EVENTS:

- Ben reported on plans to hold a **Fleur de Lis LA Iris Festival** on April 7, 2019 at the Joyce WMA. Volunteers are needed to manage parking and a FMG table display. Other related organizations are also invited to table at this event. Event co-sponsor Greater New Orleans Louisiana Iris Society was represented by Gary Salathe who gave a presentation. Frank elaborated that Iris plantings elsewhere on the Greenway are anticipated.

- **Bec's to the Bridge Marathon and Half Marathon** is planned for November 24, 2019. Za reported that Middendorfs Restaurant won't be holding its annual run this year, the professional race organizer N.O. Running Systems has been retained and plans for parking and all appropriate safety precautions are being made. Race fees will be competitive and a post-race party is planned at Bec's.

- Ben reported that the proposed **FMG Nature Walks** program featuring SLU Biology students will need sponsor(s) and he was tasked with developing a budget and prospectus to use as sales tools to find them.

CANOE LAUNCHES:

- Za and Tom detailed conflicts and troubles with parking at the Shell Bank launch and discussed possible solutions with signage indicating the best places to park and not to park. Apparently, some long-time users of the site have a hard time accepting new users and some of these visitors are challenged about unwritten courtesies for using of this site. We will attempt to mediate. Canoe outfitters have been noted bringing as many as 15 boats at a time and the site is often visited up to six times a day by outfitters that are mostly from New Orleans.

MANCHAC GREENWAY ADVISORY PANEL:

- Za will speak to the new St. John the Baptist Planning Director to update her on our Manchac Greenway project and the need to activate the joint-parish advisory panel made of FMG Board members, parish administration and council officials who can help move the project forward.

GREENWAY MANAGER:

- Ben reported that interest in funding this position has been expressed by Tangipahoa Parish and a proposal for the duties involved with it has been prepared. The Executive Committee of the Board has been tasked further with proposing an allocation of the amount of time these tasks might take before the proposal is resubmitted to the Parish. Za Maurin will introduce the idea of a similar, corresponding position to the new St. John the Baptist Parish planner.

RESTORE PROGRAM UPDATE:

- Alma, Melinda, Ben and Bridget where to attend a meeting with the Parish and its contractors on this project the next day. See the afterward for a report.

"MANCHAC GREENWAY" EXIT SIGNS:

- Ben reported no news on this item.

ADOPT-A-ROAD:

- Ben reported the status of FMG, Bec's on the Lake, NOLA Kayak, New Orleans Kayak Swamp Tours, Canoe & Trail Adventures, Wild Louisiana Tours and Tangipahoa Sheriff's Dept. adoptions on the Greenway and made an appeal for suggestion for more Adopters.

- Lisa reported the **second FMG Adopt-A-Road** is planned on its mile for March 30, 2019.

- Tom Kane reported that his Canoe and Trail Adventures group found a recliner and swimming pool liner on their adopted mile near Shell Bank Bayou. He proposed advertising free paddling trips to potential volunteers.

- Don report he may have found a volunteer organization to adopt one of the abandoned picnic parks on the west side of the Greenway in St. John.

RING AROUND THE LAKE:

- Frank reported that a team at the Greater New Orleans Regional Planning Commission and SLU Geography Professor Molly McGraw are busy working on a detailed report and interactive GIS map of various assets found on the proposed Ring Around the Lake. Ben has been working concurrently with a student at the SLU Small Business Development Center on a similar "consumer-style" report.

MEMBERSHIP COMMITTEE:

- Galen produced a list of some twenty people who have recently signed on with the new Friends of the Manchac Greenway Membership Program, made donations and received a welcome letter acknowledging their contribution. Galen reported a second annual contribution of \$150 from St Joan of Arc thrift store in Laplace.

PORT MANCHAC UPDATE:

- Terry Jones reported on the recent meeting of the Port Manchac Commission where they voted to create a scope that includes some seven criteria, including deposits, rent and other lease terms in order to send out a Request for Qualifications (RFQ) to interested parties to qualify to receive a Request of Proposals (RFP) for new use(s) for this facility that the Commission may eventually select from. Friends of the Manchac Greenway (FMG) would like to see this parcel of filled-in and ruined marshland on North Pass be used for eco-tourism and other recreational purposes that are

compatible with the Greenway, it's neighbor across the street - the North Pass Boat Launch / Manchac Exit Interstate Rest Area controlled by Tangipahoa Parish and the desires of the public. We have recently been asked if we are submitting an RFQ for a RFP; we can't because we're the FMG.

NEW BUSINESS:

- A proposal to change meeting days from Wednesdays to Tuesdays and Thursdays was accepted.

COMMENTS & SUGGESTIONS:

- Gary Salathe made a presentation about the Louisiana Iris. As their seeds are toxic, they don't typically spread by animal poop and only float far enough away to grow in clusters. If these are destroyed, the plants are less than likely to reappear. The Greater New Orleans Louisiana Iris Society has plans to propagate this beautiful Official State wildflower by having them grown by contract and also salvaging them from areas to be destroyed by development and then reintroducing them to areas previously diminished by salt water intrusion and in high visibility wetlands like the swamp along the Greenway and other boardwalks in the region. These clusters have the potential to double in size each year by spreading rhizome and seed.

NEXT MEETING:

- Tuesday, 12:00 - 4:00, April 23, 2019 at Turtle Cove Research Station on Pass Manchac. Meet at the Turtle Cove dock in Galva, LA.

RESTORE PROGRAM POSTSCRIPT:

Alma, Ben and Melinda met with project contractors ELOS Environmental, Meyer Engineering, City of Ponchatoula and Tangipahoa officials (including FMG Board member Bridget Bailey) on 3/14/19 to learn about proposals for joining the Manchac Greenway from Akers on Pass Manchac to Hwy. 22 in Ponchatoula.

- The least expensive route would be to widen, resurface and stripe the highway shoulder (with rumble strip) from Manchac (Akers) to South Slough (Seltzers Canal), however, the much preferred and more expensive route would be to pave the existing Old Hammond Highway roadbed instead, making much safer entirely separate bike path with a much greater possibility having of shade from adjacent trees. Rather than rebuilding damaged or missing bridges across the many drainage cuts ("equalization channels") along the way, simple "double-S" roundabouts would be paved to quickly route bike traffic out to the highway and back.

- The route from a new bridge over South Slough northward will likely be a raised wooden causeway either in the swale between the I-55 and Canadian National Railroad rights of way, or, using the existing railroad crossing at the City of Hammond Wastewater Assimilation Facility to proceeding on the east side of the track to Ponchatoula. This route along the edge of the Joyce WMA may be the less dangerous and difficult of the two.

- The entry into Ponchatoula on the west side of the tracks would either use the City's southernmost rail crossing to get to the City's Southeast Railroad Ave, or, if the route on the eastern side of the track was used it would already be aligned with this street. This is a relatively quiet street away from the busy highway and is to be upgraded and integrated in the City's Smart Street Program with sidewalks, curbing and other amenities.