

# **MEETING MINUTES for the Friends of the Manchac Greenway (FMG) March 5, 2020 @ Middendorfs Restaurant, Akers, LA**

## **IN ATTENDANCE:**

Frank Neelis, Cathy Brignac (representing LA Rep. Bill Wheat), Tom Dumas, Galen Schum, Devin Foil (St. John Planning Dept.), Dwight Williams (Lake Pontchartrain Basin Foundation), Lisa Williams, Greg Za Maurin, Stanley Bienemy (Director, St. John Economic Development), D'Neil Figuero (Assistant to the Director of St. John Economic Development), Leslie \_\_\_? (Intern, St. John Economic Development) Karen Parsons (Greater New Orleans Regional Planning Commission) and Doug Faust (Riverboat Captain)

## **TREASURER'S REPORT:**

Galen handed out a statement accounting for FMG expenditures and deposits this February showing a current ending bank balance of \$3,275.67. In addition, he handed out a detailed statement for 02/01/19 - 01/31/20 showing all FMG income and expenditures in the past year.

## **MEMBERSHIP:**

- Galen reported that most of the FMG membership signs posted on the Greenway remain. Fifty were printed with the intention of placing them on the Greenway at likely locations at random times until they completely disappear through "attrition" and the program can be evaluated.
- End-of-the-year FMG membership renewals are coming in.
- Ben brought up the idea of adding a Special Event component to the FMG Membership Committee as the two functions are allied.

## **UPCOMING GREENWAY EVENTS:**

- FMG's Second Quarterly Litter Pickup will be 9:30 AM, Saturday, March 21st, 2020 in conjunction with the Tangipahoa Parish Manchac Spring Sweep, Entergy and the Lake Pontchartrain Basin Foundation. Please meet in the Joyce WMA parking lot at the beginning of our LA DOTD Adopt-A-Road Mile for bags & grabbers. "Many hands make light work."
- The Louisiana Iris is/are blooming on the Joyce WMA Swampwalk boardwalk on the Greenway!
- The Ponchatoula Strawberry Festival at the northern end of the Greenway is scheduled for April 3-5.
- The Annual Spring Fling to benefit the Special Olympics is planned for April 26 at the Beacon Lounge and Lakeside on the Greenway in Galva.

## RING AROUND THE LAKE:

- Frank reported on recent conversations with USACE officials about a levee-top bike path on the new storm-surge protection levee in St. Charles, St. John and St. James Parishes that would connect the existing Mississippi River levee bike path with the Greenway. Some of the details that must be worked out include acquiring either congressional authorization through local Congressional representatives or by local government request, determining a cost share arrangement, covering cost of maintenance, etc. & etc. Ms. Parsons offered to do research to clarify this matter.
- Tangipahoa Parish Planner Bridget Bailey and St. John Parish Planner Rene Pastorek have advised Frank that bike/pedestrian components are part of their respective comprehensive traffic plans. This detail is deemed necessary by the Greater New Orleans Regional Planning Commission (NORPC), the authority on area transportation infrastructure priorities, for working toward an Around the Lake Bike Trail. This welcome bi-parish collaboration was called for in the previously established Manchac Greenway Commission and has been a long-sought goal for the FMG.

## FUNDING:

- Activity arising from recent conversations with the Marathon Petroleum Foundation for assistance on the Greenway is still pending. At their request, Galen has registered FMG with the GuideStar non-profit information service.
- Entergy is offering an Environmental Grant with an upcoming April application deadline. A FMG request may be used for a Greenway Vegetation Management Program to selectively clear and propagate plant growth on the roadway or, if the timing is right in this cycle, for beginning work on a Comprehensive Master Plan for the Greenway (which would encompass a vegetation plan and many other subsets).
- Ms. Parsons has previously conveyed the need for such a professionally prepared Comprehensive Master Plan for the Manchac Greenway that covers all aspects of what is wanted, needed and how to get there. This blueprint is required for transportation funding and other resources and FMG, with Ms. Parson and the RPC's assistance, pledges to redouble its efforts toward this goal.

## CANOE LAUNCHES:

Ben reported on his recent meeting with the LA DOTD District 62 Administrator who advised that the continued illegal parking by canoe companies and others on the highway shoulder at the Shell Bank Bayou canoe & boat launch will eventually require action that may include posting No Parking signs and their enforcement. Ben related to the Administrator FMG research and other work on this matter and our advocacy for an equitable resolution to this situation. He and Frank also recently consulted with Land Trust for Louisiana for their possible assistance with property ownership issues at this location. An "Outdoors Roundtable" is planned by the River Parishes Tourism Commission to solicit ideas from FMG and regional ecotourism companies.

#### ISTHMUS RESTORATION AND PROTECTION:

Mr. Williams described recent LPBF efforts to help re-establish the historic forest cover on the Isthmus of Manchac. Some 2,800 trees have been planted so far, complete with nutria guards, and are being monitored for their success. Ponchatoula High School is in the process of setting up a small nursery operation to provide more trees. One million cypress seeds were dropped from an airplane on eastern Jones Island to determine the success rate for this method of propagation. LPBF will provide small trees for planting at Sunset Park and other locations on the Greenway. Call Dwight at (504) 919-5041 for information.

#### ST. JOHN MINI-PARKS & SWAMP TRAIL IMPROVEMENTS:

- Galen reported his maintenance work at the Rev. August's restored mini park at the Ruddock I-55 Exit and its new FMG Welcome sign.
- A FMG memo to the LA WL&F offering to seek funding for needed improvements to the Maurepas Swamp WMA Swamp Trail on the Greenway has so far been unanswered.

#### NEXT MEETING:

2:00, Thursday, April 30, 2020 at Bec's on the Lake Restaurant, Frenier, LA