

GA Natural Resources Foundation Board Meeting Minutes

Meeting of March 3, 2016, 10:30 a.m.

DNR Board Room, East Tower

The meeting was called to order by Vice Chairman, Ross King, who was substituting for Board Chair Amy Hillman who, notwithstanding being under the weather, participated in the meeting remotely by phone. Other Board members in attendance were Glen Wilkins, Steve Levetan, Kali Beyah, Philip Wilheit, Jr., Robert Brown, and Commissioner Mark Williams.

Mr. King welcomed the new Foundation Executive Director, Mark Walker, and explained that he had a very fine background of experience having served as Development Director for the State YMCA of Georgia, as well as success stints with Piedmont Healthcare and Southern Regional Health Systems. Mark is married to Amy and they have two children, a 15 year old daughter, and 12 year old son. Amy is Media Specialist at Woodward Academy Primary School. Mr. King complimented Mark Walker on successfully competing with a large number of candidates with a wide and good range of capabilities, and emerged as the Search Committee's unanimous choice to serve as the Foundation's Executive Director. Mark thanked the Board for its confidence in him and told them just how pleased he was to take on this wonderful new challenge, and that he hoped to meet with them individually as well to get to know them better.

Commissioner Mark Williams presented his report and commented on the just completed Weekend for Wildlife being the second highest ever success in terms of funds raised. He reported that he and his staff were still working on legislation of interest to DNR and to the State of Georgia. For example, HB 840 relates to the use of native wildlife used in movies being filmed in Georgia, and DNR is also working on some proposed legislation adjusting the hunting and fishing license fees. He reported that Historic Preservation Division Director, Dr. David Crass, is organizing an important Employee Development Retention Program, a very high priority for DNR with its first Leadership Academy. Bobby Bond, Joe Kurz Wildlife Management Area, was recently named at National Wild Turkey Federation Officer of the Year at the convention in Nashville, Tennessee. In closing, Commissioner Williams thanked Lonice Barrett for his service as Interim Foundation Executive Director.

The minutes from the October 6, 2015, meeting were approved following a motion by Steve Levetan and a second by Mark Williams.

The financial report (**Exhibit #1**) for the period July 1, 2015-February 29, 2016, was approved following a motion by Philip Wilheit, Jr. and a second by Glen Wilkins. This included a request for Mr. Walker to proceed to get the new signature cards signed so as to transfer the authority to sign checks to pay Foundation bills.

Mark Walker requested Lonice Barrett to provide a report from the 28th Weekend for Wildlife, and Mr. Barrett presented the report as outlined on the attached document. **(Exhibit #2)**.

Mr. Walker then discussed his Plans and Priorities for his first six months ahead with the Board. One of his biggest goals is to pursue an overall statewide “grassroot” approach to getting the word out and promoting the programs and initiatives of the Foundation. He listed his three (3) immediate top priorities. (1.) He stated that he was working on a proposed Development Plan for Foundation Fundraising Efforts. (2.) He was going to be meeting with the Senior staff of DNR and Commissioner Williams, and (3.) He was sincerely soliciting suggestions from the Board about how the Executive Director and the Foundation Board could best work together and spread the word about GNRF. He specifically mentioned the new gnrf.org website and how it would be pivotal in helping the Foundation make broader approaches and outreaches to Georgia natural resources-supportive citizens.

Mr. Walker proceed to implore the Board to help open some doors whereby the Board member and him could make the call, or at least, he could follow up on an opportunity the Board would help set up. He said he was really excited about meeting with prospects suggested by the Board members, and would certainly enjoy going with Board members to visit with them, or going by himself after the Board members had opened the door. He described this important activity as being critical to the success of the Foundation efforts.

He also commented that he wants to work closely with Commissioner Williams and his five (5) line divisions to improve our general and non-restrict donations and contributions. He emphasized that the designated gifts were also important, and would remain an emphasis, as well.

Mark also commented about the 2017 Weekend for Wildlife and the fact that planning for next year is already underway. He asked Board members to suggest people for him to go see as a part of the Foundation’s efforts to expand visitation and participation at next year’s 29th WFW.

He closed his report by commenting on his desire to create a Customer/Constituency Relationship Management (CRM) System for donor, participation tracking and constituent management. He spoke about the need for some new Board members, and closed by commenting on the importance of generating some grant proposals on an annual basis. Glen Wilkins commented that the Board really needs to give Mark some help and assistance on Foundation proposals and how important it was that they be completed so as to provide the potential grantor just the right info that would help justify the requests and improve our chances of receiving the awards.

Vice Chairman King then commented that the Board should think long and hard about the terrific work-plan just outlined by Mark Walker, and his report should be embraced by the Board as our plan of action for the upcoming year. He said that there shouldn’t be any doubt in anyone’s minds as to why Walker had been employed to be our new Executive Director and thanked him for an excellent report.

There was a review of the schedule of meetings for the balance of 2016 which were approved by the Board (**Exhibit #3**), and a discussion about potential fund raisers. One idea briefly discussed was a repeat visit to Arrowhatchee for another event. It was emphasized that we need to be careful on planning events are extremely difficult to organize and conduct and don't really bring in a lot of money. More discussion will take place on these later.

There being no other business, the meeting was adjourned.

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