

Friends of Five Rivers
2023 Annual Membership Meeting Minutes
February 11, 2023

Welcome and Call to Order

- Kathryn Simpson introduced the meeting, thanked everyone for being there, and facilitated a short activity to help members center themselves
- Board President Andrea Ricard welcomed members, introduced the mission of the Friends of Five Rivers
- The meeting was called to order at 3:35pm. 31 members attended in person, 18 by Zoom, and there are 7 proxy votes that the Vice President will be voting when the time comes
- Thanked DEC for cooperation and participating in this meeting
- Recognized Ann Harrison, Chief of the Bureau of Environmental Education, on her retirement. The Friends presented her with a gift of a leaf on the Giving Tree.
- Ann congratulated the Friends on their 50th anniversary and activities.

Housekeeping and Zoom Attendee Instructions

- Silence phones or mute if attending by Zoom
- Members will be asked to vote 4 times: minutes, board nominations, bylaw technical changes, and to adjourn the meeting

Acceptance of Minutes 2022 Annual

- The minutes from the 2022 Annual Meeting were sent in a notice to all members and posted to the Friends website. Kathryn Simpson moved to accept the minutes. Ayal Kushner seconded the motion. Cyndee Berlin voted 7 proxy votes. There was no discussion and the minutes were approved.

Election of Board Members

- The new nominees to the board were introduced: Ayal Kushner, Carole Nemore and Kathryn Simpson. Mary Louise Stanford made a motion to accept the nominees. Kitt Jackson seconded. There was no discussion. Cyndee voted 7 proxy votes. The new board members were approved.

Vote on Proposed By-Law Amendments

- Sent with the email to membership
- Trying to streamline language around membership and dues; no substantial changes
- Mary Applegate made a motion to approve the bylaw amendments, Jon Smolensky second. There was no discussion. Cyndee voted 7 proxy votes. The amendments to the bylaws were approved

Financial Report

- Randal Coburn presented the overall financial picture: revenue outpaced our spending
- Breakdown of operating: most comes from government grants, contributions/donations/gifts/grants, dues, program fee, gift shop. 46% from private sources

- Question from floor about applying for government grants. Randy described the ZGBA grant to support staff and other grants that support naturalist interns. Randy described the partnership between the Friends of Five Rivers and DEC and DEC staff.
- Where we spend our money: educational programming (guided school program and others), fundraising (development efforts), management and administration. Of these funds the bulk is for human resources, including salaries for Nancy Conway, Nancy Payne and Paulette Doudoukjian
- 89% of the money we spend goes toward program services or other activities held at Five Rivers
- We couldn't do this without our members and donors

Center Director Report

- Gina Jack, Center Director of the Five Rivers Environmental Education Center, gave a short history of Five Rivers Environmental Education Center
- Welcomed more the 100,000 visitors this year
- Highlights from the year:
 - Launch site for the Capital Region section of the NYS Birding Trail. 229 bird species sited
 - Nature bus – partnership with CDTA and Mohawk Hudson Land Conservancy. Bus provides access to natural areas in Albany. Many programs were developed around the Nature Bus schedule. Encouraged members to submit the Nature Bus user survey
 - Fisher Trail – incorporates 35-acre easement into Five Rivers. Connects residents to the rest of the trail system and almost 0.5 miles of trail is built to DEC's accessibility standards.

Development Report

- Paulette Doudoukjian presented highlights of development and communications
- Summarized the events that occurred this year: "Creative Expression Exhibits", August Art Days, Fall Festival.
- Development committee put together the Giving Tree and other giving opportunities
- Grew our social media: Facebook, Instagram and LinkedIn
- Worked to increase awareness and presence - Bethlehem Chamber of Commerce

Membership and Volunteer Report

- Decreased physical mailing and substituted with emails to better align with our environmental mission
- Reminders for renewal are now arriving electronically
- Reminder – you do not have to be on the board if you would like to serve on a committee. Committee is looking for ways to attract and retain members. We'd like to hear them
- Volunteers – greeters, special event volunteers, board members, majority of guided school instructors
- Highlight 2 volunteers" Laurie Keefe (gift shop manager) and Ingrid Carlson (volunteer coordinator)
- If you know anyone who has a background in document management we are looking for help in that area.
- Described the expansion of the Gift Shop

Education Committee

- Summary of the Suozzo scholarship and last year's winners was given
- Nancy Conway and Nancy Payne were unable to attend. The Educational Programming Highlights were presented on their behalf, including the Guided School Program and Beautiful Day Family Programming
- More volunteer instructors are needed

Land Use Committee

- Miles Garfinkel shared with membership the work of the Land Use Committee

Adjournment: Kathryn Simpson motioned to adjourn the meeting. Ayal Kushner seconded. There was no discussion. Cyndee Berlin voted the 7 proxy votes. The business meeting was adjourned at 4:33pm.

Presentation

- Miles Garfinkel introduced today's presenter: Mark King, Executive Director of the Mohawk Hudson Land Conservancy.
- Andrea Ricard presented Mark with a Five Rivers history book, t-shirt and card