

South East Volusia Audubon Society

February 6, 2023 Meeting Minutes

Attendees:

Marsha Cox, Bill Cox, Jane Talbot, Liz Merideth, Robert Merideth, Dean Spears, Bob Chew, John Kendal, Susan Dayer, Richard Fasse, Gail Rogers, Jenifer Russell, Joyce Riddel

Agenda:

New form of governance for SEVAS
Bylaws
Reports from committees

Discussion of new governance:

Marsha opened the meeting by saying she wanted to look at options and the research they have done for our new governance. Co-presidents Marsha and Bill are in their last term and no one has stepped up to be the president going forward. Marsha consulted with different people who have ideas about how to run going forward. She consulted with Meichelle from Clearwater Audubon which runs on an executive committee (exec comm) of five people with different talents and interests. Each member has a group of responsibilities under them. Marsha, Bill, and Richard looked at how to setup the president's tasks by steering committee (steer comm). Meichelle recommended that the steer comm has an uneven number of members, and recommended five. They also recommended that one person be a "non-SEVAS" person, someone from one of our partners or from the community who has the same vision and care for the environment but who is not currently in SEVAS. Meichelle said that after two years Clearwater had the option to go back to the traditional model but decided to continue with the exec comm. The group communicates well and works well together. She is willing to help us set up a similar structure. Clearwater is a bigger chapter than we are, they have both seasonal and year-round members. Someone must take the designation of "President" for the official papers for the state of Florida. Someone must officially hold the offices of President and Treasurer. Clearwater has one of the five exec comm take turns being the lead person each year. Jane and Bob expressed concern having the "non-SEVAS" person be the lead person for a year. The five-person steer comm would act as "president" and report to the board. Each member would have equal power, but one person would be "president" in name for reporting purposes. Marsha asked where does the "buck" stop? Who has the ultimate responsibility? Consensus is that the majority of the five steer comm is where the buck stops, and the by-laws will reflect this. The two current presidents would be replaced by the group of five.

With the current structure, the two co-presidents have the constant ability to communicate with each other. To mimic as closely as possible this open communication, it is recommended that the steer comm should meet weekly. All agree that the current foundation for the organization setup by Marsha and Bill is fantastic, and we have to change the administration but continue the legacy of the well established 50 years old chapter.

Bill asked who would have the job of visioning for new programs/activities/partnerships/grants?

New bylaws would need to clarify who is on the board and a process to elect or appoint a replacement if one of the five steer comm members leaves during the year. Bylaws need to be clear on whether the steer comm is a temporary and only in place when there is no president, or if it is permanent. Consensus that steer comm is in place until someone steps up to be president, at which time the group would vote again. Everyone in the steer comm must be a paying member in good standing.

This prompted a discussion of who would vote and what defines a member. A "member" is someone who is up to date in paying their dues, and is eligible to vote. We may want to call these folks "members in good standing". A "friend of SEVAS" is someone who is on our mailing list but has not paid dues. All

agree there should be communication to remind folks to pay their dues both as an email and as well as a reminder in the newsletter. Going forward, we must advertise membership. Each October, an email should be sent to “friends” reminding folks that it is time to pay and including instructions on how to pay. Communication should say that at the end of November, you would still be a “friend of SEVAS” but not have voting privileges.

Richard put together a worksheet of possible division of labor for the steer comm. Each member of the steer comm would have areas that report to him/her, and autonomy to create direction, do research and in conjunction with the board make recommendations for their area. Recommendations or requests for funding outside of the regular budget would then be brought to the steer comm.

Richard’s worksheet areas:

Birding – Tuesday morning, birds & brews, monthly field trips. Need someone in charge of newsletter articles and calendar, planning and making the events happen. This is currently done by the presidents.
Communications – Run by Robert. Includes Facebook, Meetup, Newsletter, website, new technology
Conservation – tabling, programs, outreach, purple martin (PuMa)
Admin – treasurer, membership, includes reporting currently done by Bill to National and state.

John pointed out that there needs to be a line of communication between the five steer comm members, possibly a text or email chain.

There are also strong budget needs for the steer comm. Each area would submit their budget for the year, then the admin committee determines how much money must be raised. The steer comm then determines if this is feasible. Areas live within their budgets unless they get approval for more from the board.

A nominating committee is being formed which includes Richard, Jane, and Marsha. Folks currently on the board and committees should expect phone calls. The committee will ask folks if they are willing to continue in their current roles, and if there is anything else they would like to do. Liz asked for someone to write an appeal for the newsletter, talking about the restructuring. Bob will do an article for the newsletter. Liz mentioned a program called Audubon Ambassadors at Stetson, and asked if we could get someone from this program to volunteer. They could help with the admin, learn how to run a nonprofit. John suggested Zach Taylor could do this, and his mother would be a good candidate for the board. The nominating committee will nominate the five steer comm members.

Jenifer has agreed to continue as treasurer.

Jane has agreed to continue as secretary.

Trish has agreed to do programs again next year

Kim has agreed to do Birds & Brews again next year

With this new structure, there would still be a board. The board may not need to meet as often, and would get reports from the steer comm, raise issues and vote. Marsha will ask Meichelle for a copy of the Clearwater org chart and bylaws.

Bob will put together a draft org chart for the group to review/discuss.

We are aiming to vote in the April meeting to adopt amendments to the bylaws and for the new board and steering committee.

Marsha is excited about this new direction and thinks it will bring energy to the chapter.

Richard moved to accept the new structure of a five person steering committee, Dean seconded and all present voted to approve.

Action items:

Bob will do an article for the newsletter on the restructuring.

Bob will put together a draft org chart

Marsha will ask Meichelle from Clearwater for a copy of their org chart and bylaws

Discussion of bylaws:

It was determined that discussion of the bylaws should wait until all review and submit their comments to Bill.

Action item:

ALL please review the bylaws and send any comments to Bill

Area reports:

Susan reported that she has been working with Joyce to learn the ropes of the Plants 4 Birds (P4B) gardens.

- Dean takes great care of the MDC garden. More plant label stakes were needed and have been ordered with both the name and scientific name of the plant. Also, a staghorn fern was added to the garden. This is not a native plant, but was donated to the MDC and they requested that we use it.
- Laura Devlin is taking care of the Myrtle Park garden. There is still a problem getting water to the back gardens. A great blue heron is on a nest above the back garden!
- Bob Chew is working with Winston Byfield on the Babe James garden. They met with the staff and discussed expanding the garden and expanding activities around the garden.
- Joyce and Susan met with Chisolm Elementary to determine placement of bluebird gardens. Ann Brown is working on this project with our group. There are six houses. The boxes have arrived, but we need to get poles in place. The bird bath was full of bluebirds taking baths! Placement for the meadow has been determined. Susan will meet with Jonathan Edwards who has been creating a similar meadow for information.

Susan will send Liz information for the newsletter.

Joyce thanked Susan for stepping up! Joyce will no longer be a member of the board. Everyone thanked Joyce for the wonderful job she has done with the P4B project since its inception.

Action item:

Susan will send Liz information for the newsletter

Tabling:

Gail reported that we have received \$640 so far this year from three farmers markets. There is also the huge benefit of being out there talking to people. It is really nice when folks come back to the table to talk about birding, making an effort to plant for the birds, etc.

Next event is March 2nd the Utilities Commission Springfest. Gail is looking for folks to help at the table. Also if you live in New Smyrna Beach, you can sign up to get a free tree. Liz and Robert plan to be there barring travel issues. Marsha suggested having a theme for the tent such as PuMa. Someone could give a short talk on the colony.

Gail said our sign needs an upgrade. It should have the new logo and possibly our mission statement. Liz will forward the new logo. Tracy at MDC has good contact info for signage, Gail will contact Tracy. Bob moved to authorize Gail to spend up to \$200 for new signage without further approval. Jane seconded, all present voted to approve.

Bob reported that he has completed building PVC weights for the tent and will bring them to the next event.

Pawpaw native plant sale will be on April 6th.

Speaking with the Land will be on April 27th

Susan offered to have prints of her photos made to sell at tabling events. Prints will be 5x7 and in a mat.

Action item:

Gail will investigate buying an upgraded sign

Susan will have prints of photos made to sell at tabling events

Other business:

Liz asked that any articles or reports for the March newsletter be sent to her by February 19th.

Liz asked for photos and bios/stories about each garden manager.

Joyce reported that she and Susan may do something for Earth Day like plant the microforest on that day. They also hope to have a bluebird walk and possible other events to be determined. Earth day is April 22nd.

Richard reports that four scout PuMa's were checking out our gourds but they have moved on. He got a security camera setup and online so the gourds can be viewed live.

Dean reports 13 new friends of SEVAS, 3 new members and 2 renewals since our last meeting.

Susan will research new places to bird. Liz suggested Deep Creek Park.

Meeting adjourned at 5:30

Minutes submitted by Jane Talbot

Addendum: Jane requested a schedule change of the March meeting from March 12 to March 13 due to a personal conflict. Bill and Marsha concurred.