

## **LAFFITE'S COVE NATURE SOCIETY**

### **Annual Members Meeting**

The Laffites Cove Nature Society (LCNS) annual members' meeting was held on March 23, 2013 at the Galveston Country Club. Mort Voller, Vice President, called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m. A quorum of members was established by the attendance of members and absentee proxy/ballots. Susan Gonzales, President of CKM Property Management was present.

Bonnie White and Susan Gonzales presented the Financial Report and budget for 2013. It was stated that the marsh shelf budget for 2013 was \$10,000 compared to \$15,000 in 2012. The corporate legal fees were reduced from \$25,000 to \$5,000.

Mort Voller gave the overview of past years activities, highlights and lowlights. The Society is not a HOA and is not involved in typical homeowner type issues. LCNS was separately and uniquely created to maintain the preserves and canals, as defined and agreed to in the permit under which the developer was able to create this beautiful neighborhood. The City owns the preserves. The Society owns the canals.

#### **The Preserves.**

Preserves E and D straddle Eckert Drive and amount to about 31.5 acres, and there are about 3.5 other acres scattered around. They are remnants of the vast system of ancient inter dune swales or sloughs and elevated ridges which have run along this island since its formation. They are incredibly important to plant and animal wildlife. They support migrating flocks of ducks and colorful tropical songbirds, and a long list of other critters, some of which may have uniquely evolved on this island. They provided a bountiful seasonal home for indigenous natives and for our earliest west enders

Many of you made your decision to live here because you loved this feature.

At the beginning Preserve E was totally enclosed with hurricane fencing and there were gates at the entrances. Rules for use as originally created reflected the priority given to preserving the nature and passive quiet uses. The developers might have preferred that this lovely feature not be open to the public but they had no choice. Clearly however it was not ever set up to be a playground, a running track or a park.

During the past year the focus has been to: Enhance the experiences of those who wish to view and appreciate natural things, and includes increasing the number of small interpretive signs, and improving the bird drip features. Help the wooded ridge continue its recovery from Hurricane Ike by keeping invasive species from taking over while we wait for the old tree canopy to get re established, and to help the more desirable trees get re established by planting more and watering them.

We attempt to do all this at minimum expense through the maximum use of volunteer labor and leveraging the ad hoc use of hourly paid persons.

Routinely we contract out keeping the pathways from getting overgrown. Less frequently but at least once a year we contract for the open areas to be mowed to 8 inches and the fence lines to be cleared. We sensitize the contractors to the uniqueness of the work,

The satisfaction from all the work is that our little ridge and our woods are now a sought after destination for Birders, General Naturalists and Nature Photographers, preferred by many to High Island. It creates recognition for our neighborhood and brings visitors to Galveston Island, a plus for local realtors.

You can help us by making sure that the rules of usage posted at every entrance are respected, by your guests and contractors. Just a week or so ago there was a young couple with two large dogs, which were splashing around in the pond. Yesterday one of the landscape workers started to drive past standing visitors, taking a short cut between Jibstay and Binnacle...a situation that has broken the stairs at the Binnacle entrance at least twice in the past.

I would be amiss to not mention the work done on the pioneer Wern Family Cemetery plot off Windlass Court. Research was done and application made for National Historic designation by amateur historian, Kirk Clark. The plot has been cleared and we plan to have an interpretive sign there at some point. There was a mass of paper white flowers there in the early spring, remnants obviously of one purposefully planted.

## **The Canals**

Our canals were dug to 7 ft below MSL and are mostly 80ft wide. There are numerous culverts under roads and lots to provide connections and to avoid dead water spots. Water testing at 4 points during the first several years indicated that the design worked and that O2 and bacterium levels were satisfactory.

An additional idea, in lieu of the standard bulkhead edge, was the creation of a flat shelf along each edge so that the canals could have a living edge of marsh grass. If canals are our internal roads, it could be thought of as wet landscaping. The total acreage was not trivial and created a habitat where young fish and shellfish could safely hide and grow and which would help with water quality. The ACOE, for the public at large, accepted the marsh grass shelf plan as part of the developer's mitigation for the acres of marsh grass, which was to be destroyed in the development process.

The more routine activities this past year have included removing large trash, monitoring "no wake" buoy locations and requesting replacements.

We continue to need all the members help in keeping boat and jet ski speeds below those that create wakes and waves against the docks.

The most contentious issue last year was the decision by this expiring Board and by Boards since 2005, to try to find a low cost (and somewhat proven) way to restore the living edge of marsh grass and to start to plan to invite lot owners do it. Over time the original flat shelf has become a 30-degree slope and the water depth increases quickly to where no grass will grow. However sufficient numbers of canal lot owners were against the Board's specific design, cost and warranty, that the project was set aside, went back to the drawing boards. .

## **Enforcement of LCNS Covenants.**

LCNS was “delegated and assigned the powers of. . . . .Administering and enforcing covenants and restrictions of the Woodlands Corp’s declarations (as it pertains to maintaining the canals and managing the preserves).

Unfortunately there is some over lap in the Laffites Cove Covenants and the LCNS Covenants and attempts by LCNS to use it own authority to handle its own definitions of Deed Restriction Violations was challenged. A truce has been called and work is proceeding to try to find a satisfactory solution.

## **Communications.**

For as long I recall there have been calls for better communications with Members. A few years ago John Strom started the process of adding a Member Forum Question period at the end of the Directors Board meetings. We attempt to keep Minutes and Financials up to date on the LCNS website. We have recently formalized our meeting schedules to the second Saturday, every other month, at 8am. If all members would provide us their email ID’s we could send out news to all more timely and efficiently. Sending it by UPS is costly. We do rely on Rex Ross of PPOA to trigger email notices. Despite all the efforts, news just does not seem to get to some folks, so be sure to register on the website at [www.piratespoa.com](http://www.piratespoa.com) and also notify CKM of your email address at [ckm1@ckm1.com](mailto:ckm1@ckm1.com). Thank you for your support . . .I am sure the Board will continue to try to do what they believe they need to do and hope that there is agreement on what that is.

**Communication by Email:** Discussion was held concerning the most effective way to communicate with the Laffites Cove property owners. The Pirates POA is working on updating the website but it may not be able to separate just Laffites Cove property owners. Susan Gonzales with CKM stated that the CKM system can do an email blast to Laffites Cove owners since their system is separate for Laffites Cove POA and LCNS.

Jim Walters stated the intent is to move forward on nature preserve preservation and to provide information to members. Communication is the key.

Mort Voller stated that new Oak trees were planted by Harry Sturges. The LCNS appreciated the donation of his time and plants.

**Election:** Susan Gonzales stated that there are seven (7) Directors, four are elected members and three are scientific members. At this time there are two member Director positions to be filled. There are six candidates and each was asked to speak. Pam Allen has a family emergency and was unable to attend. Brenda Dawson, Ben Hock, Andy McCloskey, Andy Steinhubl and A.J. Widacki each spoke to the members. A call for a vote was made and the members completed the ballots. A count of Proxy & Ballots was held with Terri Farmer counting the votes. The results of the election were the members elected Brenda Dawson and Ben Hock.

Mort Voller stated he has the proxy from Phil Glass for the purpose of the election of the Scientific Member. Mort Voller stated that by unanimous vote the Scientific Board elects Scott Weaver to a three-year term.

**Board meetings:** Future Board members will be held every other month at 8:00 a.m., every odd month at the Galveston Country Club. Meeting schedule will be May 11<sup>th</sup>, July 13<sup>th</sup>, September 14<sup>th</sup>, and November 9<sup>th</sup>.

The meeting was opened up to members for questions and general discussion. There being no further discuss the members meeting was adjourned at 10:05 a.m. and the Board had a brief intermission and reopened the meeting into a Board meeting. Mort Voller called the meeting to order. A quorum was established by attendance of Directors of Mort Voller, Bonnie White, Ben Hock, Brenda Dawson, and Jim Walters. Purpose of meeting was to elect a slate of Officers, approve bank signatures and discuss briefly future meetings.

Discussion was held concerning the election of Officers. Motion by Mort Voller and seconded by Brenda Dawson, the Board by unanimous vote approved to elect Bonnie White to hold the office of President. The Board voted by acclamation to elect Jim Walters as Vice President, Ben Hock as Treasurer and Brenda Dawson as Secretary.

Discussion was held concerning the bank signatures. Motion by Bonnie White and seconded by Brenda Dawson, the Board by unanimous vote approved that the signatures for bank accounts will be Bonnie White – President, Ben Hock – Vice President, and Susan Gonzales – CKM.

Discussion was held concerning the positions held by the Scientific Directors. It was agreed that Mort Voller represented the Avian Biologist, Scott Weaver represented by Naturalist, and Phil Glass represented the Marine Scientist.

Bonnie stated she would like the Board to have planning workshops to discuss goals and opportunities. There would be no decisions made at these workshops. The first workshop will be held on Tuesday, April 9, 2013 at 5:30 p.m. at Bonnie's home.

There being no further business before the Board motion by Mort Voller and seconded by Brenda Dawson, the meeting adjourned at 10:52 a.m.

Susan Gonzales  
Recording Secretary