**Meeting Minutes**

**CITIZENS ADVISORY COUNCIL FOR WHTE CLAY CREEK STATE PARK**

**April 22, 2014, Chambers House Nature Center**

**Persons Present:**

**Council and Division Representatives:**

AFL/CIO – Delaware – not represented

Coalition for Natural Stream Valleys – Andy Urquhart

Delaware Audubon Society – Dorothy P. Miller

Delaware Equine Council – Mary Everhart

Delaware State Sportsmen’s Association – Donald Palmer

Delmarva Ornithological Society – not represented

Friends of White Clay Creek State Park – Glyn Thomas

Mason-Dixon Trail System – Robert Bennett

Trail Dawgs – Pete McLaughlin

Trail Spinners – not represented

UAW CAP Council – Delaware – not represented

White Clay Flyfishers – Ed O’Donnell

White Clay Watershed Association – Linda Stapleford

Wilmington Trail Club – Gary Kirk

Greg Abbott – Division of Parks and Recreation

Sue Staats – Superintendent, WCCSP

**Members of the Public:**

Glenn C. Everhart

Peter Saenger

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

I. The meeting was called to order at 7:05 pm by Chair Linda Stapleford. Council Representatives, Division Representatives, and Members of the Public introduced themselves.

II. Minutes of the January 28, 2014 meeting prepared by the Secretary were approved unanimously.

III. OLD BUSINESS

* A question was raised about the scheduling of a planned reroute to the Preserve Loop Trail just north of the Nature Center. The trail has been marked “Closed” at both ends of an area where the Creek has nearly undermined the trail. However, there is currently no alternative route available. Mr. Abbott stated that trail work was generally delayed by the extreme winter weather. He indicated that he would provide an update on this item to the Council.

IV. NEW BUSINESS

* Susan Staats was introduced as the new Superintendent of White Clay Creek State Park. Mr. Abbott summarized her background for Council. The date of the Council meeting was Ms. Staats second day in her new job. Council representatives expressed a warm welcome to her.

Mr. Abbott indicated that Barbara Woodford will replace Angel Burns at the WCCSP Nature Center. Mrs. Burns will become the new Superintendent of Auburn Heights State Park.

In a general discussion of issues and directions for the park, Mr. Urquhart raised a question about whether the Master Plan for the park, now dormant for several years, might be completed. Ms. Staats indicated that she was aware of the question but would have to look into it. Mr. Abbott pointed out that the planning effort, although not completed, generated a large number of ideas and options for the park. For example, he indicated that consideration was being given to relocating the Park Office to Nick McFadden’s former residence on Wedgewood Road.

* Division plans for the Robinson House were discussed. Currently it is used for day camps and programming, after a considerable effort to clean up the property. Mr. Abbott indicated that refitting the building for ADA accessibility is the major problem limiting further uses. In the master planning process there were lots of ideas for future uses of the property (primitive camping was one example). However, a few hundred thousand dollars would be needed to refit the house, and that money simply isn’t available.

Mr. Abbott indicated that the Division currently owns 600 buildings and has a capital project backlog in excess of $80 million. Last year they received $2.5 million. With such limited funding, priority must be given to projects involving public health and safety. As an example, Mr. Abbott indicated that the Division closed the Biden Center at Cape Henlopen State Park because of lack of funding to make it ADA accessible. Thus, the Robinson House will continue in its current uses for now.

In response to a question whether Parks would be open to a fundraising effort, Mr. Abbott replied that the approach needed would be to determine the best use, plan repairs and budget, and then raise funds. Mr. Thomas indicated that the Friends of White Clay Creek State Park are currently raising funds for repairs to the Judge Morris House, and might be able to do more. Other possibilities suggested were matching grants from the Land and Water Conservation Fund and corporate partnerships.

* Mr. Abbott indicated that the Division is working closely with the new Cabela’s store being opened at the Christiana Mall. The store will have a 15 x 80 foot wall with pictures and information about the state parks. In addition, the Division will have a kiosk in the camping section of the store to provide information about activities in the parks and to sell park permits. Mr. Abbott stated that the Division is very pleased with its close, cooperative relationship with Cabela’s.
* Mrs. Stapleford asked about the uprights along Hopkins Bridge Road that separate pedestrians and bicyclists from automobile traffic. Most of them are currently missing. It was suggested that a lot of them were taken out by snow plows.

In further discussion it was pointed out that parking along Hopkins Bridge Road, mostly by fishermen, is hazardous. The Division is losing revenue and experiencing property damage as people park along the soft shoulders of the road before the “no parking” area. It is a basic problem that the park cannot accommodate the crowds of fishermen around Opening Day.

* Mrs. Stapleford announced that Creek Fest would be celebrated on May 3, 2014.
* Mr. McLaughlin announced that the Triple Crown foot races are scheduled for the weekend of April 26 – 27, 2014. Proceeds from this event are used to support homeless shelters.
* There was a discussion of a problem with a bollard at the intersection of Creek Road and Hopkins Bridge Road (south side). Bollards have been placed at this point to close the road to automobile traffic. However during fishing season the central bollard has been removed to allow fishermen to exit from Creek Road. A short section of bollard was left in place to improve visibility and reduce a possible tripping hazard for pedestrians associated with the mounting bracket for the bollard. However, some cars were dragging their undersides on the shortened bollard. Just before the meeting the problem was solved by the park staff by painting the bracket yellow for visibility and eliminating the short bollard.

V. PUBLIC COMMENTS

* Mr. Saenger recalled a presentation at the January 22, 2013 Council meeting in which the Division indicated they were planning to improve a wet/muddy area of the Creek Road Trail where it crosses a field north of the Nature Center and just south of Chambers Rock Road. He indicated that this improvement has not been done and is badly needed. He asked if this is still in the planning for trail work. Mr. Abbott indicated that he would ask about this and respond to Council.

VI. ITEMS FOR POSSIBLE FUTURE CONSIDERATION BY THE COUNCIL

* Ray Bivens, the new Director, Division of Parks and Recreation, plans to attend the meeting on July 22, 2014 for discussions with Council.
* Inadequate parking for fishermen.

VII. NEXT MEETINGS – scheduled for July 22, 2014 and October 28, 2014, both at the Chambers House Nature Center.

VII. ADJOURNMENT – the meeting was adjourned at 7:49 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Andy Urquhart

Council Secretary