

Rails to Trails of the Withlacoochee Citizen Support Organization
Membership Meeting, November 17, 2016
5:00 PM, Lakes Region Library, Inverness, FL

The Membership Meeting of the Rails to Trails Citizen Support Organization was called to order at 5:00 PM by President, Sherry Bechtel, with the Pledge of Allegiance opening the meeting. Officers and Directors in attendance were Rich Roussel Vice-president; Kerry Smith, Treasurer; Pam Atkinson, Secretary; Directors Steve Diez, Jim McLean, Chris Moling, Dennis Reiland, Linda Reiland, Ken Spilios, and Don Zutaut. Park staff in attendance were Dianne Drye, Park Services Specialist, and Chris Raby, newly appointed Park Manager of Ft. Cooper State Park and the Withlacoochee State Trail.

Minutes: The minutes of the September 15, 2016 meeting were approved unanimously and to be filed.

Treasurer's Report: Kerry reported a cash balance as of October 31st of \$113, 732. He wrote a check for \$27,000. today for a 2015 Fort Transit van which will be picked up tomorrow, November 18, 2016. Also, the Ride with 995 paid riders netted \$28,000. Sponsorship monies covered ride expenses.

Introductions: Dianne introduced Chris Raby as the new Parks Manager of Ft. Cooper State Park and the Withlacoochee State Trail. Chris started his park career at Ft. Cooper in 1998 and expressed his pleasure at returning to Ft. Cooper in his hometown of Inverness.

Ride Report: Dennis described a successful 22nd Annual Bike Ride on Sunday, October 2, 2016 with the 995 participants and a large group of volunteers contributing to the ride's success. For 2017, Sherry Bechtel has agreed to chair the Ride with the assistance of Ken Spilios. Rich has volunteered for Registration; Jim McLean for Parking, and Karen Counts will continue as Volunteer Coordinator. There is a need for a Food Manager as well as a Coordinator for continuing Sponsors and adding new ones. Denny responded to a question about differentiating the October Ride from the March Clean Air Ride. For the record, all proceeds from the October Ride go to the RTW CSO, while the Clean Air Ride pays a set fee per rider to the CSO.

Standing Committee Reports

Work Crew: Don Zutaut announced that the recently purchased Ford Transit van has 22,000 miles on it and can seat 10 to 12 passengers. A back up camera and trailer hitch will be installed. This purchase by the CSO will be used on the Trail by Park personnel and volunteers. Once the title is issued, it will be transferred to the Park Service to complete the transaction and insurance requirements for its use on the Trail. Don thanked the riders who have contributed to the success of the Bike Ride which raised funds for this purchase. The Wednesday volunteer work crew is working on benches at the Inverness Trail Head using special wood to replace bench slats. They wood will be sealed with a clear sealer and should last for 10 years. The idea of purchasing a bucket truck is on hold and a lift truck will be rented and used as needed for trimming. There are currently 10 to 12 volunteers working on Wednesdays.

Newsletter: Heather Nagy, Editor, announced that she needs articles, event announcements etc. for the Dec-Jan issue of Trail Tales. The Facebook account has 2000 followers and a weekly reach to 6000.

Merchandising: Al Cairns reported sales of \$5000. worth of T-shirts and jerseys. He also thanked volunteers from The Villages for helping him with sales at the recent Ride. As 2017 is the anniversary of 200 years for the bicycle, he is creating a design for a new jersey.

Trail Updates: Dianne reported that she, along with Rich, Jim, and Don will be selecting areas of the Trail for repair and working with Citrus County Public Works to do the work. There is a new contract for mowing the trail in process. Personnel changes on the trail include: the retirement of Diana Mitchell with Dean Jacobs as her replacement; and a new ranger, Jim Jones, will be starting soon. The Trilby “trailer,” a rest stop .9 miles north of the Owensboro Junction Trail Head, will be demolished in the near future.

New Business: Dave Nagy suggested a review of the policy of traveling on the right side of the trail. Dianne and Chris responded that any change would be difficult to regulate and that it would stay as it is.

Program Presentation by John Cripps: John and Arienne Cripps are from Stouffville, ON, but winter here in Inverness. Jerry Willert invited them to share with the membership their trip of Quebec's Gaspé peninsula in NE Quebec the last 2 weeks in June, 2015. John's Power Point presentation on the 600 mile (900 km) ride clearly showed the technical and logistical planning necessary. They rode a tandem bike with “fattie” tires which easily handled the varied terrain and road conditions. Also, they pulled a 100 pound trailer—pretty heavy for a luggage rack! Their route started at St. Flavie, Quebec on the St. Lawrence River, and they pedaled in a clockwise direction to Matapédia, Quebec, at the far eastern end of the Baie des Chaleurs. A few of the highlights included a large wind farm near Matane, Ste Anne des Monts and the Chic Choc Mountains, the hang gliding at Mont St. Pierre, as well as Percé with its well known rock formations in the Gulf of St. Lawrence. The ride from Gaspé, the city, to Percé had a 19% grade! Arienne celebrated both her 70th birthday and remission from cancer with this trip. They have others on their agenda, including hiking (and biking?) in Hawaii. Thank you for sharing this interesting trip.

As there was no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 6:20 PM.

Respectfully submitted by Pam Atkinson

RTO CSO Secretary/Administrative Officer

Next **Membership Meeting** scheduled for February 16, 2017, Lakes Region Library, Inverness FL

