

# West Virginia State Parks Foundation

## Minutes of a Special Membership Meeting

October 15, 2014

The meeting was convened at the Stonewall Resort State Park in Roanoke, West Virginia at 10:00 am. President Jim Michael welcomed park and foundation representatives and made introductions.

President Jim Michael introduced the two new at-large Directors, who were appointed by the Governor. They are Ken Caplinger and Milton Gutman. They will serve as full voting Directors.

The meeting started with brief reports of activities by the local foundations that were represented:

**Cacapon:** Jim Michael said their foundation is having a good year. Over 1,000 people attended their Labor Day event. Rehabilitation of the Old Inn is going well. There are plans to expand the nature center because the current one is getting over 13,000 visitors per year and is too small. The Foundation has received a donation to set up a \$100K trust fund and the Foundation will get the annual income from it.

**MSR&LHA (Cass):** Bob Hoke reported that the Association's work to restore a historic steam locomotive in the park is going well. The annual Cass Railfan Weekend in May was successful, but made less money than expected. Interpretative services for the Park have run smoothly this year. The railroad operations are being turned over to a private operator soon and it's unclear what impact that may have.

**Pricketts Fort:** Greg Bray said that visitation is up 37% this year and he hopes to further increase it next year. The calendar of events has expanded significantly. 2016 will be the Fort's 40th anniversary as a state park.

**Stonewall:** Rudy Henley said their foundation has started a fundraising campaign. There's a new wildlife display featuring donated specimens, and it will become the basis for an outdoor education program. The "Nature Odyssey" program was launched to get kids interested in being outside. The initial program had 40 kids and was well received. The Foundation is doing accessible trail construction as an ongoing project.

**Holly River:** Donna Boggs reported that their Labor Day festival was successful, but that they are still feeling the effects from Hurricane Sandy. They have installed a solar light in the Conference Center area. The Foundation has received some memorial donations. A recent road bowling event was popular.

**North Bend Rails to Trails:** Mark Abbott said that various bureaucratic delays are making it difficult to spend the money in their TEA-21 grant. The amount of the grant was recently enlarged and they hope to be able to start spending it in the spring. The depot was burned years ago and they hope to rebuild it in the future.

**Valley Falls:** Andy Wilkins said their Foundation is selling concessions from a trailer. They have purchased two trailers and a large generator for the park.

**Tomlinson Run:** James Harvey said that their Foundation has been relatively inactive this year, but their next major project is to replace some outdated playground equipment.

**WV State Park Superintendents Assoc.:** Mark Wylie said the Association is a private group with the goal with the goal of protecting and promoting the state's parks. He noted that their purpose is not to get raises. One thing they do is provide a \$1,000 scholarship that can be given to any Park System employee. Ken Caplinger noted that the Superintendents Association's goals are very similar to those of the Foundation and that we may be able to collaborate on common projects.

### Sam England's comments:

- Sam said that he is new on the job. He said he has toured many of the parks with Secretary Burdette and has been impressed, but has seen their maintenance needs. He noted that the Park System was able to get an additional \$3M in funding despite the state's dire financial situation.
- The DNR owns the mineral rights under the Ohio River. They plan to sell the oil and gas in some areas and the current hope is that the money will come to the DNR, but that could change. Even if much of the money goes elsewhere, Sam said he hopes the parks will get at least some added funds. The Cacapon and Beech Fork lodge projects are likely to get first crack at any new funding. He also said he hopes that any windfall funding doesn't disrupt the routine funding flow.
- Sam discussed the important role of individual foundations and volunteers in supporting the parks. He noted that encumbering funds is a problem with grants that need matches.
- He discussed the agreement between the DNR and the State Rail Authority transferring the rail equipment and operations at Cass to the SRA. He T

said the resources will be subleased to the Durbin & Greenbrier Valley Railroad to operate and maintain. The transfer should save the Park System about \$700K per year in operating subsidies. He noted that the SRA has other sources of funding that weren't available to the park system and he hopes the rail operation will at least break even.

**Tourism and parks:** Rudy Henley said the Park System needs to be more active in promoting tourism in the state and that good parks tend to attract business to their area.

**Impact of gas production:** Rudy also said that it's a shame the new gas pipelines being discussed will all ship gas out of the state rather than using it to promote in-state jobs. He suggested that all parties should make sure the benefits of gas production stay in the state. He said the income from gas production could be very beneficial to the state's parks and the state in general. Milton Gutman then noted that some individuals have "excess" money from gas leases and that perhaps some of that money will eventually flow to the parks.

**Foundation Executive Directors:** Jim Michael gave a brief history of the Foundation's three Executive directors. He said they all wanted to increase the Foundation's visibility and get donations, but they were not notably successful. He then said the Foundation needs to get some younger people involved and to somehow find ways to support all parks, not just ones that receive donations.

**Administrative support:** Ken Caplinger suggested that the Parks office needs to encourage the formation of more local foundations and that the statewide foundation needs administrative support from the office to facilitate communications and increase foundation visibility. Sam England agreed, but said he can't make any commitment to provide support. Ken suggested that the Foundation send Sam a friendly letter requesting support and documenting the benefits for all involved. Following a general discussion, there was a **motion to have the Foundation send a letter to the Chief of Parks asking him to provide limited administrative support to the Foundation.** The motion was seconded and passed. Bob Hoke said he and Jim Michael would prepare the letter.

**Monopoly game:** Ken said that several years ago the Park system produced a licensed Monopoly game that was customized for West Virginia State Parks. He said it sold well and suggested that the Parks office and the Foundation jointly produce the game again and that most of the net income should go to the Foundation.

**Wonderful West Virginia article:** Ken suggested that we should write an article for *Wonderful West Virginia* magazine highlighting the projects that have been completed with Foundation funding. There was agreement that the article would be useful, but there was no volunteer to take on the project.

**Endowment Fund:** Milt Gutman noted that the Foundation has no Endowment Fund. He said an endowment fund is a pool of money where only the interest is spent. He said that, for example, Oglebay Park has an endowment fund that is dedicated to maintenance projects. He suggested that the Foundation set up an Endowment Fund and actively solicit donations to it. The purpose of the Fund will, of course, need to be defined.

**Suggestions for parks:** Milt Gutman made several suggestions for Park superintendents and other employees:

- Park personnel need to realize the importance of both the statewide and local foundations. Foundations can provide expertise, labor, and funding for projects that may be slow to receive internal support.
- Parks need to be aware of their returning visitors and find out what is bringing them back.
- Each park should have a "wish list" that they can show to anyone who might be a potential donor. The list should have a variety of projects with varying costs and potential constituencies. The list should be kept current.
- Park personnel should feel free to solicit donations from visitors, especially for memorial donations.

**Revised Foundation Brochure:** Milt Gutman said that the Foundation's brochure needs to be updated and reprinted. He said it needs to include photos of completed Foundation-supported projects and those photos need to include people enjoying the facilities, not just photos of the structures. Bob Hoke said he would prepare a revised draft and send it around for comments. He said he will solicit appropriate photos from the parks with completed projects. There was a **motion to print the revised brochure using the Foundation's general funds.** The motion was seconded and passed.

**Insurance:** The folks from Valley Falls said liability insurance is prohibitively expensive and asked where other foundations get their insurance. There was then a discussion about the need for, and cost of, insurance for foundations. Ken Caplinger said that all foundations should get their volunteers to sign volunteer agreements each year. Sam England said he would check with the WV Board of Risk and Insur-

ance Management to see if volunteers are covered under the BRIM policy that each Park has.

**2015 Annual Meeting:** There was agreement that Foundation's 2015 Annual meeting would be on Tuesday, March 24 and probably at Stonewall Resort.

The meeting was adjourned at 1:05 pm.

*Robert B. Hoke*

Robert B. Hoke, Secretary

**Meeting Attendees (in random order):**

James Michael	Cacapon SP Foundation
Bob Hoke	MSR&LHA (Cass)
Milt Gutman	At-large Board Member
Ken Caplinger	At-large Board member
Greg Bray	Pricketts Fort State Park
Blair Taylor	friend of Ken Caplinger
Rudy Henley	Stonewall Resort
Sam England	Chief of WV State Parks
Philip Davis	WV State Parks
Mark Wylie	Watoga State Park & WV State Parks Superintendents Assoc.
Jesse Anderson	Greenbrier St. Forest & WV State Parks Superintendents Assoc.
James Harvey	Tomlinson Run State Park
Samantha Norris	Stonewall St Pk Foundation
Ron Fawcett	Valley Falls State Park
Andy Wilkins	Valley Falls State Park
Diane Olivia	Valley Falls State Park
Mark Abbott	North Bend Rail Trail Foundation
Rose Ann Cowger	Holly River St Pk Foundation
Donna Boggs	Holly River St Pk Foundation
Clisby Jennelle	WV State Parks

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