

Board Meeting May, 13, 2024

Present: Jim Maul, Tanna Engdahl, Suzanne Whitney

Staff: Samantha Zeiner

Refuge Staff: Mesha Wood

Guests: Judy Chipman (City Council), Pat Carty, Lynn Engdahl, Journie Gering (3J Consulting)

Absent: Lee Knottnerus, Alex Earl, Sam Robinson (excused absence per email)

Call to Order: 5:06 PM

- **Minutes from April** meeting – [approved](#).
- **Financials** – Nicole sent them out to everyone today. Suzanne and Nicole have not been able to connect yet. We are running at a deficit this year. The deficit right now is not more than expected, our expenses are where we expected. On track to be down this year, but hopefully as we re-build we recoup and rebuild new strategies.
 - ***Suzanne will ask Nicole to please get financials to the Board at least three or four days before the Board meeting*** so that Suzanne can format the financials in a more accessible way for the board members to receive and be able to go over. At the July meeting Suzanne should be able to present for this time- and she is getting access to Quickbooks so she can better understand and report.
- **Envision 2045** see handouts from Judy and Journie.
 - City of Ridgefield has launched [Envision Ridgefield 2045](#), a multiyear effort to plan for the City's future. The first step in the process is to create a 20-year vision for Ridgefield. They are reaching out to community groups to learn what they would like to preserve in Ridgefield and what they would like to see change. They want to meet with the Friends of the Ridgefield Wildlife Refuge to hear your thoughts on these questions.
 - [Comprehensive Plan Update | Ridgefield Roundtable](#)
 - The county council has been tasked with this planning
 - Journie asking questions and Judy took notes.
 - Questions:
 - What do you like about Ridgefield, what brought you here to work, play, or live?
 - The refuge! The habitats and the connection to our history and the land.
 - Downtown at the center where businesses are preserved.

- The habitats of the refuge, and its importance and growth as a place for understanding conservation. Jim makes a point that it has come a long way from the free-roam space it used to be.
- Parks right in downtown, you can get your food cart food and go look at the Refuge from Overlook Park, or take your book from the library and read it in Davis Park.
- What are you worried about? Want or don't want to see change?
 - Tanna, Jim, and others agree that riparian spaces need to be taken care of, spaces between the refuge and other areas, and the borders of the refuge are all in danger of the current development. Houses are being built right up to the border of the Refuge, into creeks, and worse. Contractors who "mess up" can't fix loss of wildlife habitat once it happens, yet that keeps happening.
 - Better signage and connection to the Refuge, like tail signs and the sign in Overlook Park, none indicate that the Refuge is not a park- that it has a cost and dogs aren't allowed, etc. If people were getting that reminder in more places than the signs on the Refuge, it would be huge for our wildlife officers and refuge employees constantly having to explain it to people.
 - There also needs to be space around the Refuge like the farmlands and parks for wildlife to safely travel through to get to the Refuge. People vilify coyotes, but the coyotes don't know the Refuge boundaries or what someone's yard is. Raccoons are constantly hit on the road right as you come into town. Imagine if driving into town, there were signs saying "slow for the wildlife, our Refuge is their Home" it would concrete the idea of the Refuge and city connected and helps the wildlife, for example.
 - While the city grows, will it bottle-neck people up by the freeway and make Ridgefield an island cut off from the rest?
 - The growth is so fast you can see it affecting wildlife in real-time. Many of our songbirds are neo-tropical, coming from as far south as South America, and other birds are coming from the tip of Alaska or the Arctic. Ridgefield might be the end of their journey, but there are places they need to stop on the way here.
 - Light pollution

- Many people with Ridgefield addresses are unable to actually have a say in anything downtown, whether they shop, recreate, and spend time there or not. On the North side of the freeway, we can't vote in the bond, we can't vote for City Council, we don't get to support any measures, etc.
 - Tanna wonders, will there be ordinances or some sort of visible action taken by City Council based on our comments? Judy agrees that the points are good, and having them in the City charter will help future council members as well, who may not have the institutional knowledge as others in the past.
 - Tanna would also like it if the Refuge boundaries and labels would be included on the Envision Ridgefield 2024 handouts, not only to help us and remind people of the Refuge while providing feedback, but also to clarify where it is within the boundaries on the map, because right now it looks a little unclear, like the Refuge is in the urban growth area.
- Pat Carty says that the Carty family will never sell or develop their property and it will always stay in the family
 - **Jim emailed out the strategic plan draft** to all board members to go over – Sam will set up a separate virtual meeting to go over and discuss- please stay tuned for meeting scheduling details.
 - **Reminded board members in attendance that the** Board Development PD and Matrix need to be returned to Sam by end of week. Included in your reminder emails, let Sam Z know if you need it another way.
 - **Suzanne checking with Tanna about doing a Grant for the Cowlitz Fund.** Suzanne is open to doing that for us, and wants to be respectful of Tanna's position, whether she would like to be involved or kept more at a distance. Tanna feels like she would not like to be included this time based on her experience last time.
 - Meeting Adjourn: 6:21 PM