

**Meeting of the Board of Directors
December 10, 2019
Teleconference**

Members in Attendance:

Mr. Richard A. Corbett, Chair; Mr. Carlos Alfonso, Vice-Chair; Mr. Preston Fariior, 2nd Vice-Chair; Mrs. Kathy Barco, Treasurer; Eric Sutton, FWC Executive Director; Mr. Seth D. McKeel, Jr.; Mrs. Laura Russell; Mr. Tucker Fredrickson; Mr. John Pope; Mr. Steve Swindal; Mr. Steve Crisafulli; Mrs. Donna “Boo” Rawson.

Members not in Attendance:

Ms. Connie Parker, Secretary; Mrs. Daphne Wood; Mr. Bruce Popham; Mr. Paul Avery; Mr. Doug Cone; Mr. Adam Putnam; Dr. Tracy Baker; Mr. Ignacio Borbolla; Mr. Jerry Pate.

Guests & Advisors in Attendance:

Fund Manager Mr. John Lacy, The Lacy Group/Merrill Lynch; Ms. Tindl Rainey, FWC.

Staff in Attendance:

Mr. Andrew Walker; Mr. Will Bradford; Mrs. Erin Smart; Ms. Michelle Ashton; Ms. Stefani Harrison; and Ms. Danielle Cummings.

I. Call to Order & Chair’s Remarks - Mr. Richard A. Corbett, Chair

Mr. Corbett called the meeting to order at 2:05 p.m. with a roll call establishing a quorum. He welcomed and thanked all for attending and introduced Ms. Danielle Cummings, the Foundation’s new Director of Institutional Giving. Ms. Cummings expressed her pleasure in coming to work for the Foundation and her goals for her first year.

II. Consent Agenda - Mr. Richard A. Corbett, Chair

Minutes: The minutes of the September 30, 2019, in-person Board meeting in Jupiter, FL were presented. Mr. John Pope made a motion for approval, seconded by Mr. Preston Fariior. Motion carried unanimously.

III. FWC Report - Mr. Eric Sutton, FWC Executive Director

Waterways: Mr. Sutton reported on FWC’s current projects and initiatives. He gave an overview of FWC’s work with the Keys’ National Marine Sanctuary. He discussed the appreciable level of concern among some of the public over FWC and others’ use of aquatic herbicides to control invasive water plants. Mechanical harvesting is also used by the agency, but is far more expensive and time consuming. Mr. Sutton said the FWC is working on solutions within the realities of its budget and manpower to keep the waterways free of invasive species and requested the Foundation’s help to promote the agency’s good intent and work.

Pythons and the Super Bowl: Mr. Sutton discussed Governor Ron DeSantis’s announcement of the 2020 Python Bowl, a challenge to encourage the removal of Burmese pythons from Florida’s Everglades and raise awareness in South Florida. Mr. Sutton asked for aid in promoting the Python Bowl, which will coincide with the 54th Super Bowl hosted in Miami, FL on February 2, 2020. Prizes will be awarded for the best python catches with several sponsorships totaling \$20,000 in prizes with two winners receiving a football made from python skin. Mr. Sutton thanked the Foundation for its help funding the FWC display in the environmental village for the Super Bowl in Miami. Mr. Sutton is expecting the display to have a positive impact on public understanding of the agency and invasive species.

Bear Populations and Hunting: Mr. Sutton said FWC is not planning to reinstate a bear hunting season in the foreseeable future, but reserves the option to have one in the future as the bear population continues to increase. Current initiatives, including the roughly \$400,000 our Foundation has awarded to local communities to help purchase bear-resistant trash cans, have helped prevent bears from becoming a problem for homeowners.

IV. *A Night for Nature* Update - Mrs. Laura Russell, Mr. Tucker Frederickson, Mr. John Lacy, & Mr. Andrew Walker

Mr. Walker and *A Night for Nature* co-chairs Laura Russell, Tucker Frederickson, and John Lacy updated the Board on preparations for the April 3rd event. The Foundation is working to confirm keynote speakers, which may include Florida Governor Ron DeSantis. Board members were asked to contact Mrs. Russell or Mr. Walker to reserve a table; tables can seat a maximum of 10 people.

Mr. Lacy stated that he has 11 confirmed \$5,000 commitments for *A Night for Nature* and will be contacting more prospects in coming days and weeks. Mr. Walker will send the Board an updated list of confirmed and desired auction items. The Foundation has raised \$450,000 of its \$545,000 sponsorship goal for *A Night for Nature*, thanks to the dedication of our Board and staff.

V. *President & CEO's Report* - Mr. Andrew Walker, President & CEO

Coral Rescue Facility: The Foundation has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Association of Zoos & Aquariums (AZA) and SeaWorld for the creation of a coral rescue facility in Orlando to save species of stony coral from Stony Coral Tissue-Loss Disease (SCTLD). Disney is making a three-year grant of \$500,000 to our Foundation to help fund operation of the facility. So far, the Foundation has spent \$25,000 of its \$150,000 commitment to purchase the equipment needed for the facility. SeaWorld is making a three-year, \$600,000 in-kind donation of staff to run the facility. The Curtis and Edith Munson Foundation of Washington DC is also helping to fund the project. The Foundation expects the facility to begin accepting corals in mid-January 2020 [Note: now March 2, 2020.]. Mr. Walker encouraged the Board to think of anyone they know who may also be interested in the coral rescue facility project.

Suncoast Youth Conservation Center: Mr. Walker reported that the Dec. 2nd dedication of the Suncoast Youth Conservation Center's ADA-compliant saltmarsh boardwalk and fishing pier was attended by 150 children and their families, FWC leadership, union leadership and volunteers, and the media. He thanked Board Member Connie Parker for her leadership and vision throughout, citing her recruitment of the Union Sportsmen's Alliance, which provided some of the funding and the volunteer labor needed to construct the Boardwalk. He thanked Tampa board members Seth McKeel, Steve Swindal, Carlos Alfonso, and Preston Farrior for their help procuring closing grants from the Saunders and Frank E. Duckwall foundations. He also thanked Mr. Farrior for hosting the Boardwalk major donor reception on Dec. 1st at Palma Ceia Country Club in Tampa.

Without various donations of volunteer labor and heavy construction work, the project would have cost more than \$700,000, Mr. Walker said. This was more than double actual cost. The Foundation contributed approximately \$225,000 in total.

Florida Bay Sponge Restoration: Mr. Walker alerted the Board to a new project FWC is seeking our help in funding. Harmful algal blooms, high salinity and siltation have contributed to the loss over 30 years of 90 percent of the sponge community in Florida Bay. FWC has been raising 15,000 young sponges in four in-water nurseries and is ready to begin planting them in four restoration plots in the Bay. FWC needs funds to complete the out-planting and begin growing another

15,000 sponges. Ultimately, FWC hopes to plant 50,000 new sponges over five years, the first large sponge restoration effort in the United States.

Lawsuit Update: Tim O'Neil appears to be abandoning his attempted appropriation of "I DO." His attorney has asked the court to be relieved of their client due, we suspect, to nonpayment. Mr. Walker stated that Mr. O'Neil has 30 days to respond or the court will likely rule in the Foundation's favor.

Python Skins: Mr. Walker reported that he met with Edison National Bank CEO Mr. Geoff Roepstorff and python jeweler Mike Lodge to discuss Mr. Roepstorff and his wife's sideline as python hunters and to seek his help in identifying a reliable python skin tanner. Mr. Roepstorff tans his own skins, but suggested a tanner in Sebring. The Foundation will follow up; we hope to work with Ximena Kavalekas and others to create a market for Florida python skins.

Additional Fundraising Initiatives: Mr. Walker said the Foundation needs to ramp up its marketing on behalf of the Florida grasshopper sparrow. We recently received a small sparrow grant from Florida Audubon, he noted. He also shared that the Foundation will be developing new strategies for marketing ourselves in 2020 to conservation-minded individuals across Florida.

Staff Announcement: Mr. Walker reported that after conferring with the Board during its September 30 meeting, he has promoted Mr. Bradford from Chief Financial Officer (CFO) to Chief Operating Officer (COO), in recognition of Mr. Bradford's widening responsibilities. Chairman Corbett moved to officially recognize and endorse the promotion, seconded by Ms. Kathy Barco. The motion was approved unanimously by the Board.

FWC Employee Recognition Awards: Mr. Walker announced that staff will send out award nominations for the Humphrey and Barreto awards soon for the Board to decide the winners.

VI. Finance & Accounting - Mrs. Kathy Barco & Mr. Will Bradford

Mr. Bradford reported that the Foundation's total funds under management have crossed the \$30 million mark and have increased by 21% in the last 12 months. In the last five years, the Foundation's funds have had an average growth of 16%; the Foundation continues to be extremely efficient in spending 88 to 91 cents of every dollar received on conservation. The Foundation has an operating surplus of \$16,000 through the first quarter. Mrs. Barco said the Foundation's operational reserves and unrestricted monies combined total \$1.4 million and would be enough to sustain the Foundation for 14 months in the unlikely event that no additional revenues were received over that period of time.

Investment Committee: Mr. John Lacy shared the updates from the Foundation's most recent investment committee meeting. The Foundation has made a significant investment adjustment within the macro sectors by making a big rotation out of small and mid-sized companies. As a result, the Foundation's investments are currently outperforming the S&P 500.

"Conserve Wildlife" License Plate: The Foundation's Conserve Wildlife license plate has been experiencing a steady decline for a few years but has recently experienced 6% growth in recent months. The reason behind this increase is unclear, but matches increases for all of our plates, which may indicate this is a function of the strong Florida economy.

VII. Grants - Mr. Will Bradford, COO

Comprehensive White-Tailed Deer Study: The Foundation received a proposal via FWC from Desert Cattle and Citrus to launch the next phase of its five-year white-tailed deer study. The

Board previously agreed to fund the first two years of their research ,and FWC has requested funding for the remaining three years. Members of the Board expressed their belief that the study is a good use for funds raised through the Foundation’s deer plate. FWC Executive Director Sutton said this is one of the few long-term, comprehensive studies ever conducted on Florida deer, and significant findings have been forthcoming. Chairman Corbett made a motion to continue funding the project with a grant of \$63,000. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.

Policy Change: Mr. Will Bradford announced to the Board a recommendation by the Finance and Audit Committee to change the tag reserve policy, which in some cases will lower the amount of tag funds held in reserve. Large reserves, with the exception of the deer tag (the funds from which may be used to acquire lands open for hunting), have not been needed. Mrs. Barco reminded the Board that the Foundation does not have to spend all the tag money each year if there are not enough high-quality grant proposals; money left unused would be available for future grants. Mrs. Barco made the motion to approve the change in policy. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.

VIII. Communications - Ms. Michelle Ashton, Director of Communications

Ms. Ashton shared data for recent months on visits to Foundation’s website and our social media accounts. Audiences for the latter continue to grow; website visits fluctuate month to month and are largely static. Eblasts have been an effective communications tool and are sent to more than 45,000 recipients.

Ms. Ashton said all Board members should have received the save-the-date *Night for Nature* postcards and will receive a second reminder postcard by the end of the year. She also reported that work on the 2019 annual report is underway.

Mrs. Daphne Wood wondered if promoting a high-ticket event like *A Night for Nature* might alienate some of the Foundation’s social media following. Ms. Ashton replied that so far, the Foundation is seeing the opposite effect; this was true as well for promotion of our BlueGreen galas.

Ms. Ashton also reported that all of the Foundation’s press releases in recent months have resulted in media stories, including the release on Bass Pro Shop’s recent \$100,000 gift for coral disease work. She said she expects significant exposure once the Orlando coral facility is made public in the New Year. She concluded by noting the Foundation’s communications priorities in the first half of 2020 will be *A Night for Nature*, the bear tag redesign, distinguishing the Foundation as a credible and worthy conservation cause, and informing the public about our endowment opportunities.

IX. Governance - Mrs. Donna “Boo” Rawson

Mrs. Rawson stated that the Board had members up for renewal. Ms. Kathy Barco was eligible for her third term, Mr. Steve Crisafulli was eligible for his second term, Ms. Connie Parker was eligible for her third term, and Ms. Rawson was eligible for her third term. Mr. Doug Cone, Dr. Tracy Baker, and Mr. Bruce Popham have decided not to seek additional terms as Directors. Mr. Popham will become an advisor to the Foundation on matters relating to the Florida Keys. A motion was made to approve Ms. Barco, Ms. Parker, Mr. Crisafulli, and Ms. Rawson for an additional three-year term. Motion seconded by Chairman Corbett and approved unanimously.

Mr. Corbett asked the Board to identify highly qualified potential candidates for the Board, particularly from South and Central Florida, who would increase the diversity of our board in one or more ways.



a. 2020 Board Officers

Proposed Officers: Mr. Richard Corbett as Chair, Mr. Carlos Alfonso as Vice-Chair, Mr. Preston Farrior as Second Vice-Chair, Ms. Kathy Barco as Treasurer, and Ms. Connie Parker as Secretary. Ms. Rawson made a motion to approve the Board Slate, which was seconded by Mr. Corbett. Motion passed unanimously.

b. 2020 Board Calendar

The next Board Meeting will be Sunday, March 1 and Monday, March 2 at Chairman Corbett's Pinckney Hill Plantation in Monticello FL. The next Board Teleconference will be Tuesday, June 9.

X. New Business - Open Forum

No new business was addressed.

XI. Executive Session

The Board met for an Executive Session; staff and guests were not in attendance.

There being no further business, Chair Corbett adjourned the meeting at 3:30 pm.

Ms. Connie Parker, Secretary

Date

Mr. Richard A. Corbett, Board Chair

Date

Mr. Andrew Walker, CEO

Date