

# MINUTES

## 5<sup>th</sup> Meeting, Friends of Auerfarm State Park

4-H Education Center at Auerfarm (158 Auer Farm Road, Bloomfield)

Tuesday, December 6<sup>th</sup> at 6:30 p.m.

### Update on CT DEEP Budget for State Parks

- 2017 state budget is looking even worse than 2016
- There was 14% cut to DEEP in 2016 and there is set to be an additional 10% cut in 2017
- It is looking like DEEP needs approximately 30 employees to retire without replacement for there to be no layoffs in the current budget. This is not sustainable.
- Linda Vossion, current Auerfarm State Park Supervisor, is supposed to retire by the end of this year. She will not be replaced and her territory will likely be absorbed by Tammy Talbot who currently oversees\_\_\_\_\_.
- Additionally, last year DEEP cut the seasonal budget by 45% and there is the potential for all seasonal employees to be cut in 2017. These employees are imperative in maintaining the state parks for visitors.
- There is a potential proposal coming from Kennedy's office that would add \$10 on top of vehicle registrations and would give people free access to all state parks. This could raise significant funds for the parks if it is restricted for that use.
- The lack of state funding increases the need for friends groups to lobby and work with the limited staff remaining to accomplish tasks on the ground.
- Groups need to push back on the state to ensure that they are not taking advantage without any compensation if groups begin accomplishing essential park functions.

### Presentation from Friends of American Legion & Peoples State Forests (FALPS)

- FALPS began on Earthday in 2015 – had an info table at local event and had 80 signups with emails
- Lance teamed up with local, Paul Hart, who knew many of the local people to get involved.
- They have a 9-person board with members from a variety of interests in town including historical society, 1<sup>st</sup> selectman, conservation commission & museum curator
- One board member tackles membership by sending emails for regular membership and written letters for members who give above and beyond.
- They had 80 members in 1<sup>st</sup> year (\$15 for individual membership & \$20 for family)
- There are no direct benefits of membership, but FALPS works with local stores to get member discounts. One example was EMS.
- They plan 3 months at a time for events and use facebook and media contacts for outreach. They do not yet have a website.

- Lance said that not everything has worked, some events have not been well attended, but in the beginning you have to push through and be ok with some things falling through. He said he feels like it takes 3 tries for something to become engrained.
- Jim then talked about going through the process of becoming a 501c3.
- He said that the paperwork for accomplishing this task has been greatly reduced over the years and is now an electronic federal form called 123EZ and it is about 4 pages.
- Before filing their forms FALPS established a Board of Directors and then a smaller group from the board (the crap committee) worked through some of the policies/procedures that needed to be in place before filling out any paperwork.
- This group followed the Friends of CT State Parks 20 steps to becoming a 501c3 and developed bylaws, a mission statement, a purpose statement, policies and procedures (sexual harassment & conflict of interest, etc.) and a dues structure to get them ready to apply to become a 501c3 and also to give the organization some structure.
- Key things: record-keeping is extremely important for future, need to apply for an EIN, get a certificate of incorporation and a CT tax # and wait to open a bank account until officially 501c3.
- The whole process took about 6 months, but the paperwork filing turn-around was only about 7 weeks. The hard part is hammering out the details of the structure and organization beforehand. The whole process totaled about \$550.
- Jim brought a booklet of all the information FALPS put together and said he would be happy to work with whoever is in charge for our group.

### Next meeting

- Discuss and establish an organizational purpose
- Come up with a smaller committee to initiate next steps and determine appropriate structure