

Meeting Concerning Camp Crowell/Hilaka – July 20, 2009, 6:00 p.m.

This meeting took place at GSNEO in Macedonia

Present

GSNEO Staff Members

Daisy L. Alford-Smith, Ph.D. – Chief Executive Officer, GSNEO

Roberta Uhrich – 2nd Vice Chairperson, Board of Directors, and member of Properties Committee, GSNEO

Fred Cash – Member at Large and Chair of Properties Committee, GSNEO

Brittany Zaehring, Esq. MSSA_ - Chief Operating Officer, GSNEO

Jim Kananen - Director of Properties, GSNEO

Chris Skala – Member of the Properties Committee, GSNEO

Other People at the Meeting

Lisa Sprunger

Barbara Starr

Marie Hull-Green

Penny Hewitt

Lucia Hanigosky

Donna Kowicki

Becky Richardson

Barb Dottore

Margaret Kelly

Cheryl Palmer

Pat Shore

Beth Lewun

Kathleen Bradley

Carol Clause

Holly Sauder

Janice Larsen

Mariann Evans

Renee Oppenheimer

Rachel Oppenheimer

Debbie Kramer

Kathy Stibrick

Rob Richardson

Gail Oleksy

Candace Clause

Beth Lewin

Cheryl Muth

Jacqui Muth

Margaret Kelly

Sharon Alley

Pat Boular

Sandy Phillips

Sign-In

Brittany of GSNEO had an official list for people to sign in with as they walked in and all received a paper that included the list of repairs needed at Camp Crowell/Hilaka. Friends of Crowell/Hilaka had a table that had a wonderful board Lynn made with pictures of the camp and a box of professional brochures (again, thanks to Lynn and her family) as well as our own sign in list.

List of Repairs Needed at Crowell/Hilaka

This list was distributed to all who attended the meeting and was referred to throughout the meeting.

Roads, culverts and ditches	\$15,000
Hilaka Camp manager's House: Furnace and ductwork, drainage pipe and downspout	\$12,000
Renovate pool and bath house	\$350,000
Workshop roof repair	\$5,000
Asbestos removal -- Kirby and North House	\$9,000
Hilaka Maintenance building -- roof replacement	\$5,000
Seely cabin - replace rear porch deck	\$500
Rebuild outhouse and install electric at Gemini cabin	\$2,000
Kirby -- remodel bathroom	\$2,000
Kirby -- rebuild cinder-block stairs	\$500
Install new shut off at outside showers and wash stations	\$1,000
Stain outhouses and Gemini Cabin	\$2,000
Repair Beech Cliff Latrine	\$3,000
Replace platform tents and decks	\$10,000
Adirondack unit -- new roofs	\$2,500
North House -- Replace porch decking/paving bricks	\$500
Wastewater treatment plant -- new motors, deck repairs, replace piping	\$10,000
Crowell dam improvements	\$350,000
Crowell camp manager's house - Demolish	\$20,000
Misc. -- clean cabins, yard maintenance, winterize cabins, trim trees, split wood and stack, seats for fire scars	\$2,000
	\$802,000.00

Total operational expenses 5/2009 through 4/2019 - \$125,227

Welcome by Daisy L. Alford-Smith, Ph.D. -- CEO

Daisy opened the meeting by welcoming all of us and telling us that they are in the process of transforming Girl Scouts of Northeast Ohio to be bigger and better than before. They know that GSNEO is continuing the work of all of us as they go into the future to help girls. She assured us that they know we were there to hear about their plans for this camp and that they look forward to joining forces with us to collaborate and identify strategies that can help girls and our community.

Daisy introduced the other staff members as listed above.

Fred Cash – Statement

The GSNEO Board of Directors implemented reviews of properties and business processes. As part of the review the Board of Directors analyzed safety, finances, and commitment at camp properties. This analysis was based on meetings with the properties committee and the Board of Directors who looked at sites, and the maintenance of sites. The Board of Directors voted in May of 2009 that the use of Hilaka/Crowell will be suspended temporarily beginning October 1, 2009. This is not intended to be a permanent decision. No decision of long-term use has been discussed. This decision is a temporary decision. The decision was made primarily because of costs, maintenance, and safety issues.

The dam at Crowell/Hilaka was recently found to be in violation of the Ohio Code of Regulations and will become an increasing safety hazard. It will cost GSNEO \$300,000 - \$500,000 to repair. Other maintenance needs include the aging waste treatment plant, roofing problems, tent platform sites, and energy efficiency at several buildings. Energy and maintenance costs alone are \$154,184 per year. During this suspension period, work will be done to create plan capital improvement of this site.

This decision was discussed during a conference call (*Barb did not hear who the call included*) and positive feedback about the suspension was received.

Fred went on to say that we can help keep the camps open or limit the time of the proposed suspension by working together with GSNEO to volunteer our time and to help with the financial burden of the necessary repairs.

Roberta's Opening Statement

Roberta reminded us that we're all working in the same direction. The Board members are volunteers and want the best for girl scouting. The Board is looking at the whole of girl scouting in this council which includes 15 properties and 15,000 members. The Board found that 1/3 of the membership uses our camps every year in some way. GSNEO's top priority is having all of its campsites be approved by the American Camping Association. We already have approved sites which have great swimming pools.

GSNEO looked at deficient camps. This dam problem was inherited by this council and it is time to face this problem. GSNEO has had extensions from the state and has put off solving this problem for five years.

The purpose of GSNEO is programming and properties that support outdoor programming.

GSNEO has a goal of 2012 (the 100th anniversary of girl scouts and the 5th year of the new council) to have all properties settled as to their repairs and dispositions.

Chris's Statement

The goal of this decision is not to affect anyone detrimentally. GSNEO is going through budgeting and tough economic times which led to where we are today. The staff members present want to hear what the guests at the meeting have to say and would like to work together to meet our goals.

Open Floor Discussion

Decision to Suspend Usage of the Camp

The question was asked about why the decision was made behind closed doors by the Board of Directors without any input from actual volunteer camp users. The answer was that the Board of Directors avoids conflict of issues by not having Girl Scout volunteers on the board. The important thing is that the Board is inviting input from concerned volunteers now and that they will listen to the advice of a subcommittee that will be formed with two members from our Friends of Camp/Hilaka group and two members from every other Friends of a camp group.

It was also explained that this decision to suspend the use of Camp Crowell/Hilaka was part of many items that were cut from GSNEO including salary bonus cuts and furlough days for the staff. The Board of GSNEO cut the budget across the board so that is why the decision to suspend use of this camp came from the Board of Directors as one of its ways of keeping GSNEO financially solvent.

Structure of Leadership of Friends of Crowell/Hilaka

Many of the people who attended this meeting have not been part of the ongoing email discussions of the Friends of Crowell/Hilaka. This means that they were not able to be part of the voting process in electing temporary officers. This made some people feel left out. They were assured that FOCH is not leaving anyone out and that we welcome all help and input from everyone concerned in saving our camp.

It was explained that the leadership positions were chosen knowing they were temporary and that we will be organizing more as more people join us. Here is the list of **temporary** officers:

President – Lynn Richardson
Vice President – Nikki Kause
Secretary – Barb Dottore
Treasurer
Communication – Barb Starr
Fundraising – Sylvia Guzay
Legal – Lorraine Baughman
Programs – Rachel Oppenheimer
Annual Meeting – Christy Howard
Grounds Crew – Rachel Oppenheimer and Lynn Richardson

501C3 Status

It was shared that Friends of Crowell Hilaka has been looking into achieving 501C3 status so that donations can be collected and used for repairing the camp. Roberta suggested that instead a separate account for FOCH could be set up at GSNEO where funds would be collected and then used as needed for projects for Camp Crowell/Hilaka. A discussion followed although a decision was not reached at this time. The staff present believes it is not advisable for FOCH to have their own 501C3.

Roberta went on to explain that the Friends of Lejnar donate money to a separate account at the girl scouts. The money then goes to John Graves and they get the money back as they need it for Lejnar projects. GSNEO would like FOCH to go through council to set up a separate account. The board also suggests that we only collect pledges until the next board meeting. There can be a major problem with fundraising if money is taken for specific use and then not actually used in that way.

List of Repairs

The question was asked about where exactly the numbers came from on the list of repairs. They were based on estimates by the Properties Committee. There haven't been any contractors approached for doing the work yet.

Dam

The residents right below the dam make this a big concern. If the dam should let go, property and even people could be hurt. The Ohio Department of Natural Resources has looked at the dam. It is a threat to people downstream. Recommendations include lowering the height of the dam and decreasing the amount of water in the dam.

The question was asked about if Camp Crowell/Hilaka is shut down for a year, will the money saved go towards making the repairs. *Barb did not hear an answer to this question.*

Fred told us that GSNEO has been working with conservation groups to solicit grant money. *We need to know which groups and how they have been approached.*

Description of Situations in Question

The sewage from the camp is treated. Almost all of the water from both camps goes to Crowell. There is a pump system in place.

The dam is made of a combination of earth, and masonry, and it has deteriorated.

Upper Lake Dam

The question was asked about work done on the upper lake in the past. This was done in the 90's and this dam is approved.

Other Council Camp Finance History

Lake Erie Council did maintenance on camps as they had money. West Legacy Council had a large capital improvements drive and program several years before which is why Timberlane is up to date.

GSNEO is facing economic times and working with finance and properties committee and programs to see what camps we can keep functioning to service our members.

Decision to suspend usage not making sense to membership

Debbie Kramer stated that there is a lot of fear on our part and the feeling that this decision isn't making sense. The fear is that if the use of the camp is suspended, it will be the first step towards closing the camp. Worse problems can happen when the camp is empty. (Graffiti and vandalism for example) Looking at the numbers that we were given, why are we closing the entire camp because of the dam? There is no risk to campers on the Hilaka end so why shut Hilaka for the Crowell dam? It is not making sense.

Debbie looked at the numbers and found that \$350,000 is the pool. We've lived without the pool for years and can continue to do so. Only \$65,400 of the over \$800,000 listed is necessary for the Hilaka side plan including the waste water treatment. She asked if it possible to open up the dam, drain the lower lake and remove the risk. We'd rather lose the lake than lose the camp.

Fred said that we could work with the Ohio Department of Natural Resources on this. He said that the lake has been controlling swamp water and has to be looked at. He went on to say that GSNEO is open to keeping part of the camp open with our help or in not suspending usage if we can work together to solve many of the issues of repairs. He also stated that GSNEO has plans to have maintenance people monitor the properties during closure so that there aren't additional problems because of the closure.

Utilization of Camps

In addressing Debbie's statement about the decision not making sound sense, Roberta said that they also looked at utilization issues. The camps are costing more money to operate compared to utilization. In other words, the camp was not being utilized enough. This led to remarks from Barb Dottore and others that GSNEO's current registration process does not make camp utilization easy for leaders. Chris from council was unaware that we are not able to register for camps online. The staff was also surprised to find out that the registration staff does not always seem helpful to volunteers seeking to register for camp.

The fact that we can't register on-line makes the process difficult as well. You have to bring paperwork to the office. We've all had difficult experiences registering to camp. The being said, we agreed to focus on the future.

Brittany promised to put descriptions of the camps onto the GSNEO website to help with the registration process. *(It's there. I just saw the section and it's great! This is wonderful progress already coming out of our meeting.)*

Membership Help On Repair and Maintenance of the Camp

Lisa Sprunger, the SUD in North Royalton, reported that leaders of troops in her service unit had asked for jobs to help at camp and had not gotten any response or encouragement from council. They were ready to do fundraising for materials and to provide the labor but did not get the support from council needed.

Lucia Hanigosky reported that she also knows of girls wanting to do their gold and silver awards by working on projects at camp but that they had been turned down by people at the council office.

Gail Oleksy is a minority (because she is a she) member of the construction union. She spoke of a camp for girls called Rosie's Camp that is led by a group called Hardhatted Women that teaches girls to do all kinds of construction jobs to prepare them for careers in construction. She offered to have this group come out to do many of the items on the repair list as actual real-life projects and to help groups of scouts work on these projects.

Membership Help On Fundraising and Donations

One person asked about if there is a program in place already to solicit funds. She volunteered to solicit engineering firms using her career contacts. *I need the name of this person please. She was sitting with Jacqui.*

Specifications for Property To Be Shared

Members present from the property committee promised to share the master plan with all the specs from the Ohio Department of Natural Resources including what is required so that FOCH can talk to engineering firms and begin other fundraising efforts. This will include a list of repairs needed with specs and standards. It is the hope of GSNEO that we can work together to fundraise so that we're all on same page and so that people do not receive duplicate requests for monies for the same camp. There is a facility plan for this camp that they will share with us.

At another point in the meeting, it was said that once the committee is formed with two representatives from each Friends of camp group, the technical reports such as blueprints will be shared.

Camp History

Closing Camp Crowell/Hilaka would mean losing a lot of history of GSLEC. So many of us have memories of camping as girls or of watching our own girls camp and we want to preserve this camp for generations.

To Keep the Camp Open

The question was repeatedly asked about what exactly needs to be done to keep the camp open. It was explained to us that this is a decision that needs to be made by the Board of Directors of GSNEO. They have formed a Properties Committee (three of the members were at this meeting) that gives them the information they used to make the first decision in May and this committee will bring them information from this meeting as well.

The properties committee will be meeting with an engineer from GSUSA (he will fly out from New York) who will tour the property on August 4. Fred asked us to appoint two members tonight who would tour the property with this engineer and with the committee and hear his evaluation of the camp. These two members will report back to Friends of Camp Crowell/Hilaka as well as have input in the discussions that day.

The staff present also asked us to choose two members who would form a committee that could advise the Properties Committee along with two members from every other friends of camp group. These could be the same women we chose to attend the August 4th walk or it could be different people.

There could be no decision made to keep the camp open at tonight's meeting since we need to have the tour of the camp with the Engineer and since that decision needs to be made by the Board of Directors. Once the Properties Committee has heard from the committee made up of two representatives from every save the camp group, they will report to the Board of Directors who can then decide whether or not to keep the camp open.

The decision was made to wait on choosing the two representatives who will serve on the committee made up of people from other save the camp groups and have a vote that will include people who couldn't be at tonight's meeting. However, we did elect two people to tour the camp on August 4 with the engineer from GSUSA.

Our Two Representatives Who Will Tour the Camp on August 4 with GSUSA Engineer

The following members volunteered to go out to the camp on August 4. They each gave us their history of working with Camps Crowell/Hilaka and we each voted for two people. The vote was tallied and the two representatives meeting with the national engineer are Debbie Kramer and Kathleen Bradley. Follows is a summary of all who volunteered:

*Debbie Kramer – lots of resident camp experience both as a camper and as a leader and camp director.

Lisa Sprunger – SUD in North Royalton, girl scout from Pixie and on up.

Sandra Phillips – bought the house where she lives to be near this camp. She has camped quite a bit and knows every path.

Jan Larson – Grew up at camp and has been camping and girl scouting since second grade. She has led Mission Impossible program there in which the entire camp was used. She has also toured all of the camps in the council.

Donna Kowicki – Is from the Parma area and grew up at Hilaka from being a brownie to being a camp leader and director. She believes in at least three-hour hikes. Her older troops have built latrines there and have done other maintenance projects.

*Kathleen Bradley – She has been going out to Camp Hilaka since 1986 with her troop. She is interested in outdoor programs and lives near the camp. She would like to get the facts and report back to all of us. She is on the board of Rocky River Watershed council. That's the same stream that goes through this camp.

Rachel Oppenheimer – From Berea. She has been a girl scout since Daisies. She did her gold award at Camp Hilaka and worked there since college. She wants to save this camp. Camp is home. She said, “When I go through those gates, it feels like returning to Narnia.” *Wow!*

Thank you so much to everyone who volunteered. I believe all of us are so glad there is such great support for saving this camp!

Non Girl Scout Members of FOCH

It was pointed out to me after the meeting that it is wonderful to have other concerned people helping us with our efforts to save Camp Crowell/Hilaka instead of having it all composed of Girl Scout members. Examples would be neighbors of the camp who love having that property maintained and used by the Girl Scouts. Also, there could be concerned people who wish to help a worthy cause that don't happen to be members of the Girl Scouting community like the group Hardhatted Women that Gail mentioned. FOCH of course welcomes all who would like to help keep this wonderful camp in operation!