Suncoast Chapter of the Florida Native Plant Society, Inc.

Board of Directors Meeting Minutes

November 11, 2026 (via Google Meet)

(6:30 – 7:56 pm)

In Attendance: Board Members Anita Crnjac (President), Neal Halstead (Vice President), Katelyn Belser (Treasurer), Mary James (Secretary), Sue Cotty (At Large), Mike Fite (At Large), Carlos Frey (At Large), Tina Patterson (At Large), Linda Steele-Green (At Large)
Absent: None
Quorum Present?: Yes

- **USF Plant Sale Follow-Up:**
  - Nearly 300 plants sold. Still need to pay USF 20% fee. Per Tina, USF sent invoice to Virginia (past President). Tina will ask Virginia to forward the invoice to Anita.
  - Katelyn confirmed that payment from Little Red Wagon for unsold plants has not been received. Anita will follow up with Little Red Wagon.
  - Neal has cash box from plant sale and will ensure that it gets deposited into our bank account.
  - Earthbalance and Steve Farnsworth have been paid for plants provided for sale.

- **Board Leadership:**
  - Anita announced that Mary Lou Dahmer resigned as At Large Director on 11/6/26.
  - Neal sent email to Board on 10/14/26 recommending Anita's transition from Co-President to President following Michelle's resignation as Co-President on 10/8/26. No objections received, but will vote later in the meeting to formalize transition.
  - Anita sent email to past Co-President on 10/20/26 requesting input on several leadership transition questions. Some have been resolved, and some are still in the process of being resolved.

- **Zeffy Account:**
  - Zeffy account access still unresolved following Michelle's resignation as Co-President. Anita reported that she can log in, but is unable to make any changes because the 2-factor authentication appears to be going to Michelle's number based on the last four digits visible. Zeffy will require a Board resolution and supporting Sunbiz documentation to resolve access for Anita and Katelyn. Mary will work with Anita to prepare the resolution.
  - Katelyn confirmed that plant sale money collected through Zeffy was deposited into our bank account.

- **Sunbiz:**
  - Mary amended the Suncoast Chapter's Annual Report/Sunbiz registration on 10/20/26 to reflect current officers and contact info.

- **Bank Accounts:**
  - Per guidance from Truist Bank, meeting minutes authorizing new President, an updated Sunbiz Annual Report listing new officers, and in-person signatures from Anita and Katelyn are necessary to authorize adding Anita to account permissions and removing past Co-President.
  - Upon Board approval of meeting minutes confirming Anita as new President, Anita and Katelyn will go to bank together to complete the transition.
  - Account viewing permission for other Chapter officers can be added at a later date by the authorized signers.
  - The Board agreed that designating Anita and Katelyn as authorized signers and providing other officers with viewing permission provided sufficient oversight for the accounts.

- **Bylaws:**
  - Anita asked if anyone else wanted to join Bylaws Committee, currently comprised of Anita, Carlos, Tina, and Mary. No additional volunteers.
  - Mary suggested holding off on Bylaws revisions until the Board learns more about the Core Chapter option provided by FNPS. If Suncoast decides to transition to a Core Chapter, we will no longer require any Bylaws.

- **Core Chapter Option:**
  - Mary provided a brief summary of Core Chapter option based on info received from Susan Carr, President of Paynes Prairie Chapter.
    - Core chapters are not individual corporations. They operate under the governance umbrella of FNPS.
    - Core chapters do not have to file taxes, maintain FDACS certification, update Annual Reports, renew Certificates of Exemption, amend Bylaws, etc., allowing them to focus more on mission rather than governance issues.
    - Core chapters do not have an official board/officers, rather a leadership team.
    - Minimal, if any, change in the percentage of membership dues that FNPS allocates to Core Chapters vs. Affiliate Chapters. Some cost savings with Core status due to not having to pay renewal fees for various certificates and legal requirements.
    - Paynes Prairie was the first chapter to adopt Core status about 1 year ago. All has gone smoothly for them so far.
    - FNPS requires all new chapters (e.g., Beluthahatchee and UF Club) to be Core chapters.
  - Mary will email the Core Chapter documentation she received from Susan to the Board for review.
  - Anita will reach out to Susan and Melissa Fernandez (FNPS Executive Director) to see if they would be willing to speak to our Board about Core Chapter option at our December meeting. She encouraged everyone to be thinking of questions to ask.

- **Budget:**
  - Katelyn asked if any specific protocols she should follow when preparing 2027 budget. She has received past 5 years of budgets and actuals from Theresa (past Treasurer).

- Tina advised preparing a draft based on prior year budget. Board typically provides input on draft at the December meeting.
- Mary asked Katelyn to please email her a copy of the current 2026 budget.

- **Board Actions:**
  - ***Motion #1*: Anita motioned to approve the minutes from the September and October Board meetings that Mary emailed to Board on 9/20/26 and 10/25/26, respectively. Tina seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved.**
  - ***Motion #2*: Mary motioned to formally approve Anita as President of the Suncoast Chapter. Tina seconded. The motion was unanimously approved.**
  - ***Motion #3*: Anita motioned for Anita to be the primary administrator for Suncoast's Zeffy account with Katelyn added as a user. Mary seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved.**
  - ***Motion #4*: Anita motioned to authorize Anita to be added and Michelle removed as authorized signers for Suncoast's accounts with Truist Bank. Mike seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved.**
  - ***Motion #5*: Mary motioned to authorize Anita or Katelyn to use Chapter credit card to secure renewal of Suncoast's Post Office Box. Carlos seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved.**
  - ***Motion #6*: Anita motioned to authorize Neal to create a new login for our FDACS account using our Suncoast email. Mary seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved.**

- **Holiday Gathering:**
  - Discussed hosting a chapter holiday potluck at Trout Creek Conservation Park in lieu of a December meeting.
  - Tina will check on availability of Pavilion #3 for December 12. Pavilion rental cost is approximately $75.
  - 25-30 members typically attend holiday gathering.
  - The Chapter has historically provided sandwiches, plates, cups, and tablecloths.

- **Chapter Representative:**
  - Position is currently vacant and needs to be filled. Per Bylaws, the Chapter Representative is appointed by the Board.
  - Not a voting board member position, but Chapter Rep plays a crucial role in keeping Chapter linked to FNPS Council of Chapters.
  - Duties include attendance at the Council's monthly virtual meetings and in-person retreats (possibly two weekend retreats in 2027). Chapter Rep will also report to the Board on important discussions or decisions made at Council meetings.
  - Current officers are spread thin, so Anita called for volunteers from At-Large Directors.
  - Carlos volunteered and was appointed as Chapter Representative. He plans to attend the next Council of Chapters meeting (via Zoom) on November 22 at 6:30 pm.
  - Board members thanked Carlos for taking on the role. Anita will ask Cherice (FNPS) to add him to the email list.

- **Upcoming Events:**
  - Tram Tour of Lower Green Swamp Preserve - Scheduled for this coming Saturday (November 14) at 9 am. The Board thanked Linda for arranging the tour with ELAPP. Per Linda, 17 people have signed up so far, and only 3 spots remain. Parking details are currently pending.
  - IDIDAHIKE – Anita, Carlos, and Mary initially planned to represent Suncoast at this Florida Trail Association event scheduled for December 12 weekend. However, due to registration fees ($60/person), conflict with holiday gathering, and other variables, it was decided that Suncoast will not attend the event this year.
  - Prescribed Fire Fest – This Hillsborough County ELAPP event is scheduled for January 24, 2027 (9 am – 2 pm) at Medard Park. Linda, Tina, and Merrilee are all planning to attend and represent Suncoast.
  - MacDill STEM Day Extravaganza – Scheduled for February 24, 2027 (9 am – 2 pm) at MacDill AFB. Sue received an invitation to attend on behalf of Suncoast when she was representing the Chapter at the Hillsborough Hiking Spree kick-off last weekend. Discussed taking a microscope and some native plants so STEM students can view morphology in detail. Sue is interested in representing the Chapter, but doesn't have a microscope. Tina has the Chapter's microscope at her house and will provide to Sue prior to the event.

- **Recent Correspondence Received:**
  - Share Your Awesome Talent Survey – Council of Chapters sent email on 11/5/26 requesting all Chapters to share the "Awesome Talents" survey with their membership. A link to the survey and sample email to members is provided in the "working doc" Anita prepared for the November Board meeting.
  - Email from UF Student – A UF student reporter emailed on 11/4/26. The student is working on a story about Hillsborough County's Neighborhood Tree Grant Program and would like to include a local perspective on native trees and neighborhood planting efforts. Anita will ask the student to send some sample questions in advance so Board can assess relevance to our mission.
  - Potential West Tampa Meeting Venue: A representative from JSMC emailed on 10/23/26 about availability of potential meeting venue in West Tampa. They also offered a complimentary workshop session. Anita will follow-up to ask about pricing to help determine whether a complimentary visit is worthwhile.
  - Grouper Sponsorship: A representative from Grouper emailed on 11/9/26 asking about supporting the Chapter through connections with health and wellness brands. Company is based in Colorado. Discussed that it didn't sound like a good fit for the Chapter's mission.

- **Brochures:**
  - FNPS is offering to place bulk order for Chapter brochures. Request forms are due by December 4 at 5 pm.
  - Tina advised that we cannot get these low prices on our own, and FNPS typically only offers this bulk order one time per year.
  - Tina recommended not ordering any more membership brochures since those details are subject to change, but suggested stocking up on all other categories of brochures since we are completely or almost out of them (e.g., Good Citizen Guide, Mow Less, etc.).

- Last year we were able to obtain ~250 of each brochure for ~$500.
- Mary asked if there was a specific line item in budget for brochures. Per Tina, brochures have historically been filed under the Education or Outreach expenses, but she recommends creating a separate line item for them going forward.
- ***Motion #7: Mary motioned to revise the budget to authorize up to $700 for purchase of brochures, inclusive of shipping fees. Carlos seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved.***
- Tina will work with Anita to complete the order form by December 4.

- **Chapter Newsletter**
  - Per Tina, Janet Bowers expressed interest in helping with the Chapter newsletter again. Janet was previously the newsletter lead for approximately five years. Tina not sure if she is willing to prepare and distribute the newsletter or just provide content, but she will inquire further.
  - Anita has a free version of Canva software that could be used for newsletter formatting.
  - Mary also offered to provide content as-needed.

- **Committees:**
  - If anyone is interested in serving on the following committees, please email Anita.
    - Social Media
    - Speakers
    - Events/Field Trips
    - Membership/Outreach

- **Other Discussion:**
  - Native Seed Purchase for Bell Creek Preserve – Tina will send invoice to Katelyn upon receipt. Katelyn will send Tina a check for reimbursement after she receives the invoice.
  - Shade Canopy Purchase - Sue recommended purchase of a shade canopy that can be used for tabling at events. Conditions were hot and sunny at Hiking Spree kick-off last weekend. Board agreed this was a good idea. Tina suggested a canopy with our name/logo might be good for marketing. Sue will look into costs and report back to Board.

- **Adjournment:**
  - ***Motion #8: Anita motioned to adjourn the meeting a 7:56 pm, and Mary seconded. The motion was unanimously approved and the meeting was adjourned.***

The date of the next regular Board of Directors meeting is Thursday, December 10, 2026.

Minutes submitted by Mary James on 11/17/26.