

Friends of Richfield Heritage Preserve - February 2025 Report

The Friends have requested space on the agenda of RJRD's regular monthly meeting on Feb 24, 2025. The purpose is to give RJRD members a chance to answer questions: whether it's about our report, our finances, our organization, the background leading to reasons why we do things the way we do. Anything you want to know!

Activity since last meeting As you know, we have been locked out of our restoration projects, and our program offerings have been dismissed. We have used this time to reflect on our history, our hopes, and our relationship with RJRD.

Communications. About two years ago, the park director suggested that meetings could be shorter if some of the regular reports could be written and submitted in advance. The Friends complied. But have recently been accused of not notifying the board or park director of progress on various projects that were included in written reports. Maybe the reports were getting lost in the shuffle? Similarly, information flow from RJRD to Friends would be greatly appreciated. If something seems "off", please contact our president to find out what's going on.

Friends Financial Information One of the requirements of the champion program is that applicants prove they had enough money for the project or the capacity to raise it. But the reality is that fundraising is about presenting the goals to potential funders. There are no guarantees. As an example, the Friends' fundraising plan for the mill is that we complete components of the restoration in order of priority as money comes in. This has proved successful, and we have gained momentum.

Fundraising. Donors need to see that there is cooperation and goodwill between administration and the project operators. There are many very generous donors in the Akron/ Cleveland area, but some have expressed concern about the apparent rift between RJRD and Friends. The main reason the Friends asked RJRD to consider a long-term lease on Kirby House was to demonstrate a sustainable relationship where donors could be comfortable investing their charity dollars.

Sustainability. There has been a movement to preemptively demolish structures because RJRD does not have funds for long-term sustainability. However, the Friends are willing to sustain building they have been given responsibility for. We have established an endowment fund for that purpose and will continue to grow the endowment. Give us a chance. If we fail, and structures are left unattended, then RJRD has time to make the decisions that need to be made. In a nationally recognized Historic District, preference should be given to preservation when possible

Maintenance plans. Friends are willing to maintain the structures we restore. In our first version of the Amity restoration agreement, we suggested that we provide on-going maintenance. This was turned down. (Possibly because it would require being able to inspect for problems?)

Kirby's Mill. RJRD approved Friends to restore the mill with the understanding that it would be a long-term project. At the January RJRD meeting, we expressed concern about statements that had been made that would impact our ability to finish. We were hoping for reassurance, but there was none. Can you clarify your intentions?

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Friends of RHP Financial Summary as of 2/15/2025			
		RESTRICTED FUNDS	
Checking Account	\$55,130.69	Mill Restoration	\$142,523.32
Savings Account	\$3,740.92	Invasive Plant Fund	\$1,560.88
Money Market Account	\$105,323.96	Dorn Fdn- Neal Houses >Amity, North,	\$12,799.92
Money Market Account	\$142,174.74	Utilities	\$1,454.17
Cashbox	\$103.00	TOTAL, RESTRICTED FUNDS	\$156,884.12
Total	\$306,473.31	TOTAL, UNRESTRICTED FUNDS	\$149,589.19

Cost Effectiveness

Many projects have been completed at a fraction of the cost. North House rim joist, sill plate, and floor joist restoration was valued at \$20,000, but came in at under \$2,000. An estimate completed by Tim Franklin anticipated Amity House restoration would cost approximately \$500,000, but project came in at under \$50,000. Finally, the cost for architectural drawings for change in occupancy was valued at \$10,000, which was created for free (and approved on the first submission without comments!) at no cost to the RJRD or residents.

Direct Financial Contributions

- Friends wrote the Pipeline grant \$12,000 for RJRD
- Funded c. 40% cost of park office conversion (\$22,500)
- Funded security system components
- Partnered on the Lake Jinelle rehab state budget allocation (\$140,000)
- Shared grant narratives with RJRD Grants and Fundraising committee
- Facilitated installation of Gemini Pedestrian gate
- Facilitated funding for the Summer Barn horse trailer parking lot
- Created a policy to allow acceptance of 3rd party donations for specific projects at RHP

How our money and volunteer time were utilized

- Initiated the “weekend warriors” regular Saturday volunteer crew. Innumerable trail clearing, mowing, painting & repairs. Tent platform removal with RJRD volunteers.
- Made and installed wayfinding signs as well as designed and installed Kirby estate interpretive signage.
- Repaired Adirondak roofs
- Converted the pool house into equipment storage
- Investigate wells, waterlines, and utilities
- Annual Kirby day to encourage interest in park history, & Kirby’s adaptive engineering
- Annual Winter Wonders: a fundraiser for the mill and a popular holiday tradition
- “Get to Know your Park” speaker series as well as Guided hikes and customized park tours by request
- Docents for the 2022 RJRD open house as well as Kirby Mill docents
- “Defend the Forest” educational invasive species programs,
- Past programs: Fence Followers, Trail Trackers, served as advisors on RJRD committees
- History research: travel to visit Kirby & Neal descendants. Crowell Hilka Memory Project.
- Davey Tree consultation, pruning of old oak tree prior to lower dam construction
- Assisted with the RJRD’s nomination of RHP to the National Register of Historic Places
- Annual application of preservative to water wheel and disinfected the Kirby Mill basement.
- Stabilization of Amity House and North House including rim joist, sill plate, floor joists and foundational repairs.
- Funded new downspouts & gutters at North House
- Assisted with RJRD’s 2024 Goat Derby & Eclipse of the Park
- Recruited Park partnerships including, but not limited to Buckeye Trail Association, Ohio Houseman’s Council, LL Bean, Baldwin Wallace, and Dr Phil Wayneka of Cleveland State University Archeology

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Background Part II: RJRD approvals for Friends' projects 2015- 2024

Notations in blue indicate where this approval appears in RJRD minutes

2015

- **Write a monthly blog re Property activities and property history for RJRD website.** Requested by Kelly Clark in [RJRD Communications/ Volunteers Committee. Jan 15 – bottom, page 1](#)
- **Search for an outfitter to teach paddleboarding at Kirby Day.** Requested by Kelly Clark. FoCH planning meeting for Kirby Birthday party (spring/ summer- not in RJRD minutes)
- **Development of interpretive sign concepts for the Kirby estate, to be donated by Friends.** Proposal by FoCH. Approved by [RJRD, April 13](#) Final RJRD approval of sign designs - [May 22- page 4- Park Ops report](#)
- **Protect trees from beaver damage.** Proposed by Friends, approved by RJRD . [April 27 -page 5](#)
- **Assist with evaluation of roads, parking, entrance.** Requested by RJRD [May 2- page 5 chart](#)
- **Assigned to draft an MOU.** Directive by RJRD administrative asst. Debbie Blusso Rogers [Reported June 8](#). Continued work noted (although reported inaccurately) [August 24- page 8](#)
- **Co-staff Crowell Hilka table at Richfield Community Day.** Request by RJRD Communications Committee. [July 27- page 7](#)
- **Kirby's Mill restoration.** Proposed by FoCH. Concept approved by RJRD, [Aug 24](#)
- **Volunteer recruitment for fence clearing.** Requested by Bob Becker, RJRD. [Dec 14, - page 3](#)
- **Coordination of Pipeline Grant application.** Requested by RJRD Special Revenue Committee - [Dec 14, page 11](#)

2016

- **Friends / RJRD MOU** Requested by RJRD. Statement addressing RJRD concerns [3-14-2016](#).
- **Friends / RJRD MOU** Requested by RJRD. Vote to approve [3-28 page 8](#)
- **Kirby's Mill feasibility study to be paid for by FoCH.** Proposed by FoCH, approved by RJRD [May 23, page 9](#)
- **Recruitment of LLBean programming.** Request by RJRD Park Services & Special Revenue Committees. Statement: [May 23, page 20](#)
- **Donation of display map of the property.** Accepted by RJRD Park Services Committee. [Oct 5](#)

2017

- **Friends / RJRD MOU** Requested by RJRD. Vote to approve [3-28 page 8](#)
- **Friends encouraged to work in and around Kirby House**, to help prevent vandalism and possibly provide services. Requested by Ralph Waszak, Jr. [June 12](#)
- **Purchase of Mobile Beacon transmitters for RHP security system plus service contract.** Requested by Bob Becker. August 10. Transmitter cost \$1,200. Service contract extra
- **NPS partnership model.** Presented by Bob Becker. April 1 – page 1
Follow up [May 8- page 1 & Sept 11- page 1](#)
- **Manage volunteer coordination, programming, and fundraising on behalf of RJRD.** Request presented by Bob Becker, motioned by Meg Slifcak, approved by RJRD - [Sept 25](#)
FoCH acceptance in October is not recorded in the minutes
- **Potential FoCH projects compiled during RJRD partner planning roundtable.** Organized by RJRD, [Oct 9](#). addendum
- **Emergency Protection of Kirby House.** verbally requested by Jeff DeLuca. [Oct 23 – page 1, bottom](#)
- **Request to move our Christmas cookie sale to the Lodge, in order to showcase the building for rentals. Enlarge the event to become a “Christmas extravaganza”.** Verbal request by Meg Slifcak, RJRD in late October

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2018

- **RJRD thanks FoCH & anonymous donor for \$20,000.00 to convert gate house to park office.** January 8, resolution 2-2018 -page 5
- **Assessment & pruning of old oak tree at Kirby House.** Proposal presented by FoCH at [Park Ops Committee](#). [Committee approval, Feb 21](#)
- **Trailside wayfinding signs made from recycled camp lumber.** Proposal presented by FoCH at [Park Ops Committee](#). [Committee approval, Feb 21](#)
- **Planning & content contributions to RJRD Orientation “Summit”.** Request by Meg Slifcak - [Mar 10](#)
- **5-year renewal of MOU, emphasis on invasive species removal.** Requested by RJRD - 4-24 page 4
- **Proceed with Fund Development plan subject to RJRD oversight and consistent with the case statement circulated at that meeting.** Requested by RJRD - [May 14, page 2](#)
- **Funding & Restoration of Kirby’s Mill, Funding & Stabilization of Amity, Kirby & North Houses.** Work Plan Proposal by FoCH. Approved by RJRD - [May 14, page 2](#)
- **Feedback to case statement.** Requested by FoCH. [June 25 page 1](#) work session.
- **Donor recognition plan.** Proposed by FoCH as part of Mill fundraising plan. Sept 24 -work session (with attached briefing memo) Approved following meeting, but unrecorded.
- **Specialized consent form for “Barberrian” volunteers.** Composed and presented by Friends. [Approved, Sept 24- work session](#)

2019

- **RHP’s final nomination application for the National Register of Historic Places.** [Requested by RJRD - Feb 25, presentation, page 1. Approval, page 3](#)
- **Revised FoCH/ RJRD MOU** by Art Gonzales, RJRD of Governance Committee meeting. [Per request of Meg Slifcak. April 22](#)
- **Application for Rivers, Trails, and Conservation technical assistance grant completed jointly by RJRD and FoCH.** [Requested by Meg Slifcak, RJRD. Noted, June 4 Governance Committee. Full RJRD approval June 24 page 2](#)
- **ANCA coordination & funding are shared equally between RJRD & Friends.** Requested by Meg Slifcak, Expense of \$6,000 split evenly, noted in June 4 Governance Committee, [Approved by RJRD - June 24- page 2](#)
- **Kirby’s Mill restoration architect & engineering reports** submitted by FoCH. [Approved by RJRD August 26- page 3](#)
- **Arranged for delineation of concrete repair responsibilities** with Gannett Fleming, Ohlin & Reed, and reps from both RJRD & FoCH. [Requested by FoCH. September 30 – page 2](#)
- **Management of Invasive Species by FoCH.** Task Force plan submitted and approved. Formalizing the expectations by the Clean Ohio grant. [October 28, page 4](#) (first documented in the Clean Ohio application 2014)
- **Assist with the state budget allocation for Lake Jinelle Rehabilitation.** Initiated by FoCH; Pat Norris, RJRD; primary author. [Dec 16, page 3](#)

2020 (covid pandemic starts)

- **Kirby’s Mill restoration construction drawings.** Approved by RJRD [August 24- page 3](#)
- **Kirby House & Kirby garage were assigned to FoCH for storage.** Requested by Jeff DeLuca, [August 24, - page 4](#)
- **Successful state budget allocation \$140,000 announced.** RJRD [Special Fundraising Committee Dec 21- page 2](#)
- **Request for Garfield Hall to be added to the FoCH work plan.** Proposed by FoCH. [Oct 26 -page 4.](#) No action taken.

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2021

- **Use of Lodge will be free to partner groups to raise money for park projects.** Proposed by Art Gonzales, RJRD. [July 26- work session.](#)

2022

- **(Changed our primary use name** from Friends of Crowell Hilaka to Friends of Richfield Heritage Preserve.)
- **FoCH's successful grant narratives were shared with the RJRD Grants & Fundraising Committee.** Requested by Mike Selig, RJRD, Noted, [March 11](#) RJRD Grants & Fundraising Committee minutes
- **Assist with RJRD's Nature Works grant application.** RJRD Grants & Fundraising Committee meeting. Request by Mike Selig, [May 19](#) committee minutes
- **FoCH's new financial policy allows acceptance of funds earmarked for an RJRD projects.** Presented by Friends. Dave Wehner rejected the concept of restricted donation. No formal board action. Sept 26 or Sept 30 (discrepancy in record)
- **Repair of Garfield Hall porch roof-** requested verbally by John Piepsny, Fall.

2023

- **Freestanding donor recognition to be near Kirby's Mill.** Requested by Friends after the approval for a plaque in the Lodge was rescinded. Approved. [Jan 23, page 4](#)
- **Amity House Restoration.** Requested by John Piepsny. Negotiations began in January; Friends also began working on the project in January. Contract [approved by RJRD on April 24. Page 5- bottom](#)
- **Friends' president Corey Ringle provides guidance to RJRD on levels of ADA compliance and recommends one for Amity House.** RJRD votes to follow her recommendation. [Feb 27](#)
- **Application submitted to champion Kirby House for program support with long term lease. Also submitted preliminary notification that we are willing and able to champion Coach House, North House, Garfield Hall and the historic Kirby estate** Received by RJRD in [June, June 26- page 2](#)
- **Save America's Treasures grant.** Approval for Friends to move ahead [December 4, page 4](#)
- **Approval for Friends to submit champion application for Kirby House without a long-term lease** [Dec 4, 2023.](#)

The following were requested by individual RJRD members or a park director:

- HHSTF Interior Rehab of North House as requested by Jeff DeLuca included wall and ceiling plaster repairs throughout, and complete interior repainting, and floor cleaning, to make it presentable for public tours.
- HHSTF structural repairs to North House including replacement of rotted sill plates and rim joists in 4 room foundations, replacement of floor joists and removal and replacement of floor in 1st floor bedroom. Rebuilding of 1 post support beam in the Great Hall.
- HHSTF Repair and replace large section of ceiling in 1st floor of Coach House damaged by animal infestation.
- HHSTF Repair eroded the dam side wall on the cobblestone dam adjacent to the expanded metal bridge, and repair bridge railing damaged by fallen tree.
- The Park Director approved the project to convert the pool house into Park equipment storage. Involved demo and removal of old pool heater and sand filter tank and piping, removal of interior block demising wall, and reworking of electric panel and lighting.
- Submitted plan to Park Director for proper decommissioning of the swimming pool, including fill plan and several use proposals.
- The Park Director approved the project to remove rotted wheelchair ramp at Mabel Smith shelter and replace with a gravel ramp. Also replace grassy area behind shelter with graveled area for the 2 BBQ stands.

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- Park Director approved project, use borrowed tractor attachments to fix potholes in lower entrance road, and regrade/groom all of the gravel roads throughout the Park
- Park Director approved project to clear the waterfront at Amity House. Involved cutting down the brush and small trees and removing several large fallen trees, and the filling of some depressions left by uprooted trees
- Park Director approved project to clear main parking lot of all old construction debris, piles of gravel, mulch, bricks, dirt, etc. Move pallets of concrete blocks from Sawmill area to Pool area, and make Sawmill the new drop area for gravel and mulch.
- Park Director approved project to clean up all broken concrete pads and fill in all demolished latrine pits that had been left unfinished by a volunteer upon their departure from the Park
- Park Director approved projects (various) for repairs and maintenance of equipment. Involved servicing and repairs on the golf carts, the Tractor/backhoe, and welding repairs to the backhoe frame and to one of the lawnmower decks.
- HHSTF complete remodel of Amity House. Involved extensive demolition and removal of debris, replacement of plumbing, electrical, bathrooms, plaster repairs throughout, and interior painting, floor refinishing, and repairs to the porch siding and support posts and patio.
- HHSTF stabilization and exploratory repairs to Kirby House including removal of failed rear retaining wall and grading, installation of basement sump pump, removal of old basement shower stalls, removal of kitchen shelves and flooring, plumbing and electrical safety based repairs, and preliminary plumbing review to re-establish water supply.
- HHSTF project to re-establish gas, water, and electric service lines throughout the Park. Extensive exploratory line and pipe tracing, excavation of many water and electrical junctions. Capping of old water lines and re-splicing of electric lines due to careless demolition throughout the Park.
- HHSTF project to complete a first round of structural repairs to Garfield Lodge, including replacement of rotted beams and floor springs, replacement of floor joists, demolition of concrete patio. Replacement of interior flooring, new 1 level brick patio, and new covered roof section. Repairs to the rock chimney. Donor provided re-roofing.

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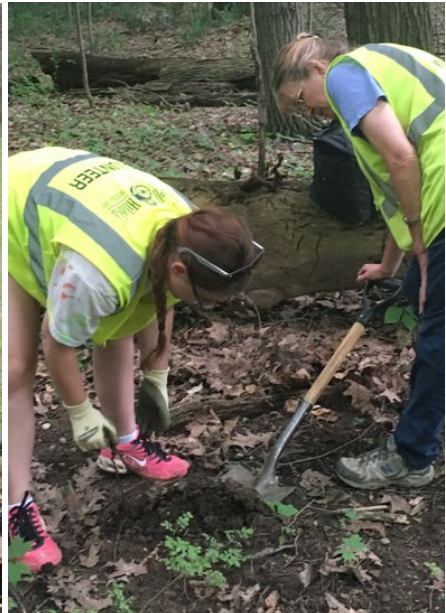
Rare, 5-lobed sassafras, found ONLY in RHP. We love RHP because it's unique; from its history to its natural resources, and its opportunity.



TLC Crew -- every Wednesday



Tree planting



Clearing invasives

Learn more about Friends of Richfield Heritage Preserve:
friendsofrhp.org - or - email contactus@friendsofrhp.org

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The Friends funded slate repairs, installation of gutters and downspouts at North House



Friends activity booth at the 2023 goat derby. Fat craft provided free of charge

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One of four Kirby History signs being installed

Friends and RJRD crew working together to take down tent platforms



Removal excess water lilies



Emergency repair- Garfield front porch roof



Bleach washing mill basement

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2020 was the bumper crop for garlic mustard at RHP. Total removal for the year was over 3,300 pounds



The Bean Boot visits the mill for a publicity shot. L L Bean was excited about the RHP partnership. They loved the opportunity to be part of a new park saved by the community. They loved the women in nature connection. They loved the Kirby story.

Learn more about Friends of Richfield Heritage Preserve:
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Background Part I: How RHP came to be

In 2004 GSUSA began a major restructuring of its program, decreasing the emphasis on camping and outdoor skills. Councils were merged; camps were sold.

IN 2012 Girl Scouts of Northeast Ohio (GSNEO) put Camp Crowell Hilka up for sale.

The highest bidder was the Western Reserve Land Conservancy (WRLC). Their goal was to preserve but not own the land. They contacted possible permanent owners who would purchase the land and accept a conservation easement on it. Cleveland & Summit Metroparks, Richfield Village, Richfield Township, private investors. They all said, "No thanks".

With six months left on the Conservancy's purchase option, and the pool of realistic buys exhausted, the land was slated to return to GSNEO, who was preparing to offer it to its second highest bidder.

Friends of Crowell Hilaka (now known as Friends of RHP) offered to buy the land through a pledge campaign. Our plan was to create a recreation area with ziplines, waterpark, and more. Part of the campaign was to provide tours to Village, Township and Historical Society officials so they would give us an endorsement. These tours evoked such a positive reaction that WRLC suggested a public open house. Richfield citizens came, fell in love, and beseeched their governments to "do something". GSNEO granted an extension. RJRD was formed, the purchase was put to the vote in 2014.

Because there was only one chance for this emergency purchase before the land would revert to GSNEO, the amount of the bond issue and operating levy had to be set low enough that Richfield voters could afford them. At that time, the Friends pledged to make up the shortfall by volunteer maintenance, repairs, restorations, and programming.

RJRD determined early on that Crowell Hilka become a Historic District. Friends said "goodbye" to the ziplines and "hello" to Kirby's Mill.

The Friends of RHP Mission: To partner with the RJRD to protect, preserve, enhance and promote Richfield Heritage Preserve; formerly camp Crowell Hilaka.