

**GBAC TMN BOARD OF DIRECTORS
DAY AWAY MEETING MINUTES
January 21, 2024**

Attendees: Gene Fisseler, Mary Dobberstine, Lisa Hardcastle, Pam House, Sharon Tirpak, Mike Petitt, Diane Humes, Tracy Walpole, Lynn Porfirio, and Jesse Monzingo. Also present were Kathy Sweezy and Eowyn Johnson. Absent members were Meade LeBlanc, Mohammed Nasrullah and Corlis Simmons.

This meeting was called to order by Gene at 10:02 AM at Armand Bayou Nature Center. Gene welcomed all and went over emergency procedures.

New Business:

Eowyn presented to the Board information regarding three youth outreach programs she is developing. The first is an after-school birding club currently held at four Clear Creek ISD elementary schools for fourth and fifth graders. She is requesting support from the Board in obtaining additional volunteers to expand the program to more schools. In addition, she is starting a program in conjunction with the librarian at the Evelyn Meador Branch Library in Seabrook. The program will incorporate nature themes and an educational activity into story time geared toward first through third grade students and their parents. If the pilot is successful, she would like to seek additional volunteers to expand to other libraries. The third program is a Naturalist Club, in partnership with the Clear Creek ISD Science Magnet Program to promote and expand environmental education. The target audience is sixth through eighth grade students. Her goal is to start a pilot program during the 2024 – 2025 school year. Eowyn will present information to students and parents at the incoming student meeting in February. She will also have a booth at the STEM night in April showcasing volunteer opportunities for students ages 10 -14 years. She would like to explore expanding this into a Junior Texas Master Naturalist program.

The Board members were excited to hear of these proposals, which are very much in alignment with our Chapter's mission. Sharon will work with Eowyn to ensure that the birding club is a program with a VMS descriptor. Eowyn will also be invited to a Chapter Meeting to provide an overview of the program and solicit volunteers. Possible funding support will be discussed later.

Next on the agenda was approval of Director appointments for 2024. The proposed Directors are Advanced Training – Mike Petitt, Justice, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion – Mohammed Nasrullah, Communication – Mary Dobberstine, Membership – Tracy Walpole, Training – Diane Humes and Volunteer Service – Sharon Tirpak. **Pam made a motion to approve the appointments and Lisa seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.**

Gene sent a copy of the GBAC *Conflict of Interest Policy* to Board members on Wednesday, January 17 and asked that they read it. The attestation noting that members have received, read, understand, agree to, and will abide by the policy was distributed to Board members today, who were asked to sign and return it. Lisa will follow up with absent Board members.

The next topic was the Financial Examination Committee and committee appointments per the Chapter Operating Handbook. Mary and Lisa will be on the committee, as will Lynn, who volunteered to serve on it as the new class representative. Gene will ask someone at the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension office to also be on the committee.

Old Business:

The minutes of the November 28, 2023, Board meeting that had been previously emailed to the Board were offered for discussion. **A motion was made by Pam to approve the minutes as written, and Mike seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.**

The minutes of the December 1, 2023 Board meeting that had also been previously emailed to the Board were offered for discussion. **A motion was made by Pam to approve the minutes of December 1, 2023 as written and Mike seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.**

Officer Reports:

President (Gene Fisseler)

Gene shared that he has been and will continue to attend the TMN-Tuesday presentations and TMN President's call and report information from both to the Board. January information included information on the continued growth of the program, plans to update the Volunteer Management System, forthcoming brand updates, Virtual Volunteer Fair in February, continuation of the TMN Tuesday program, the 2024 Annual Meeting to be held in San Marcos from October 24 – 27 and the formation of a *Friends of Texas Master Naturalist* organization to fund the annual meeting.

Vice President (Mary Dobberstine)

Mary was pleased to share the list of speakers and topics for the 2024 Chapter meetings.

Secretary (Lisa Hardcastle)

Lisa announced that she is working on compiling a list of all websites, social media platforms, email distribution lists, apps, data storage sites, financial accounts, and any other tools the Chapter uses to conduct business per the *Chapter Operating Handbook*. The list will include usernames and passwords as appropriate.

Treasurer (Mary Dobberstine for Meade LeBlanc)

Mary filled in for Meade and provided the 2023 Financial Summary. In 2023, expenses exceeded income, but we still have a healthy balance. The consensus of the Board is that this is not a concern, as we are spending the funds wisely and towards our Mission. Income was down in 2023 due to a decrease in corporate contributions. **Sharon made a motion to accept the year-end financial report and Mike seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.**

The proposed budget for 2024 was also shared. A placeholder is included to cover expenses for Camp Wild and special projects (such as the After School Bird Club) that may come up this year. Also included in an increase to “chapter meeting expenses” to cover the cost of new badges as discussed in the November 28, 2023 Board meeting. Additionally, an increase to the speaker gift allotment was included. Estimated expenses will exceed revenue. Mary also reminded the Board that there are “restricted contributions” that need to be spent before other non-restricted funds when possible. **Pam made a motion to approve the proposed budget and Mike seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.**

With new officers, a resolution to authorize Gene, Mary and Meade as authorized signers for the Chapter’s Amegy bank account needs to be made. **Mike made a motion to approve the banking resolution, Sharon seconded the motion, and the Board unanimously approved the motion.**

Other Board Member Reports

Advanced Training (Mike Petitt)

Mike shared AT information with Board members prior to the meeting. AT hours offered in 2023 were 42.25 hours of remote AT, 6.25 hours of in-person AT and 5.25 hours of hybrid AT, totaling 53.75 hours. Future AT opportunities include a Zoom presentation, *Ghost Wolves* on January 31, Chapter Meeting presentation on February 1, *Beyond the Choir – Getting Your Conservation Message Over to the General Public*, and *Diurnal Raptors* via Zoom on February 20. Three upcoming trainings will be in person, which involves planning snacks, coffee and handouts. He also expressed concern about equipment at the Carbide facility being outdated and possibly needing replacement in the near future.

Advisor

The Chapter is still without an Advisor. Gene will work with Texas A&M Agrilife to obtain an interim advisor.

Communication Director (Mary Dobberstine)

Mary shared the 2023 accomplishments of the Communication Team. She also shared an updated list of Communication Team members. She is still seeking to fill the Archive Team.

Immediate Past President (Pam House)

Pam is looking forward to getting the Scholarship committee started soon.

Membership Director (Tracy Walpole)

Tracy sent a membership report to the Board prior to the meeting. As of 12/31/2023, the Chapter had 604 members, 254 are considered “active” members. Additionally, 147 members have paid their 2024 dues so far. Jason Miles has achieved the 500-hour milestone and Stennie Meadours has achieved the 5,000-hour milestone. She informed the Board that reports are run the last Sunday of the month. Total Volunteer Service data for 2023 will not be available until the end of February since Chapter members have up to 45 days to record their volunteer hours. Tracy also reported that she has placed an order for pins and is hoping to have new badges for the February Chapter meeting. Finally, she asked that Directors review the pages of the Chapter’s website that information related to their roles and check that links are accurate and working.

Justice, Equity, Inclusion and Diversity (JEDI) Director (Kathy Sweezy for Mohammed Nasrullah)

Kathy reported information for Mohammed, who was unable to attend today’s meeting. Although nothing has been scheduled yet, the committee’s goal is to have six community trainings this year and six outreach events. Additionally, they hope to have an event on how to make the outdoors more accessible for people with disabilities. They plan on making an outreach kit which will include an activity on “tracks” and one on “scat”. They also plan to have three banners made for event booths. Additionally, they plan to obtain generic badges for volunteers, have JEDI bookmarks made and work with Armand Bayou Nature Center (ABNC) and local libraries to encourage underserved communities in the area to visit ABNC.

Spring 2023 Class Representatives (Lynn Porfirio and Jesse Monzingo)

Lynn shared that eleven members of the class have certified, six are on track to do so and she is unsure of the other five. She has emailed them, but only one has responded. While wanting to encourage all to certify, she understands that outside factors may not allow all to complete the process.

Training Director (Diane Humes)

Plans for the new training class are coming along and the first few weeks of training are planned. Diane reported that 35 individuals attended the *Meet and Greet* event and she believes there are a few more people interested in the class. So far, she has received 31 signed applications for the class. She is aiming to have 32 in the class, which will allow

accommodating all class members to participate in the pontoon boat excursion as well as the trawler trip, with each boat making two trips. Her committee is meeting on Tuesday to continue planning.

Diane also reminded everyone that the deadline for submission to *The Midden* is the end of the month in which we have a Chapter meeting.

Volunteer Service (Sharon Tirpak)

Sharon reported that she has read the responsibilities of her position. She asked about the process of forming a committee to review approval requests for volunteer service. She was encouraged to reach out to others in any way that she felt was best.

Mary suggested that she take advantage of the opportunity of being new to the position to reach out to volunteer coordinators at partner organizations such as Armand Bayou Nature Center, Galveston Bay Foundation, etc. to facilitate partnerships.

Other Business

Mary shared the 2024 Chapter Meeting dates and 2024 Board Meeting dates with the Board.

There being no other business, the meeting was adjourned at 12:40 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Lisa Hardcastle