

GBAC BOARD MAY MEETING
Via Zoom
May 28, 2024

Attendees via Zoom: Gene Fisseler, Mary Dobberstine, Lisa Hardcastle, Pam House, Sharon Tirpak, Mike Pettitt, Diane Humes, Mohammed Nasrullah, Tracy Walpole, Denise Correll, Sydney Jeffcoat and Brandi Keller. Also present was Vivian Allen.

Meade LeBlanc was absent.

Gene Fisseler, President, notified members of the meeting date and agenda via email on May 26, 2024. Participants are able to communicate with each other via Zoom. Gene called the meeting to order at 6:01 p.m.

Lisa announced the quorum requirement was established with 13 of the 14 Board members present.

Gene then reviewed the agenda.

Review and approval of minutes:

The minutes of the April board meeting were offered for discussion. Lisa had emailed a copy of the minutes to Board members prior to today's meeting. **Mike made a motion to approve the minutes as written and Mohammed seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.**

Officer Reports:

- **President (Gene Fisseler)**

Gene began by thanking our past Class Representatives and greeting our new Class Representatives, Denise Correll and Sydney Jeffcoat. Denise shared that she felt privileged to be her class's representative. Sydney agreed with Denise. The alternate Class Representative is Terri Bell. Gene also reported that Brandi, our new Advisor, has been meeting with our partners including Galveston Bay Foundation, Armand Bayou Nature Center, Gulf Center for Sea Turtle Research and others. He then requested that Brandi be allowed to speak next.

- **Chapter Advisor (Brandi Keller)**

Brandi shared that a new Administrative Assistant, Tammy Bird, has been hired for the Coastal & Marine Resources & Texas Master Naturalist Program, GBAC program. Tammy will take the VMS training so that she can run reports. Brandi also reported that she had asked Kiara to make a list of tasks she had taken care of before she left to assist Tammy.

At this time, Gene asked the Board members to introduce themselves and tell Brandi a bit about themselves.

After the Board shared their information, Brandi gave the Board a brief introduction about herself. She previously was an agent at the Harris County's Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service office. She had an interest in the Coastal & Marine Resources, Texas Sea Grant position for some time. Originally from Ohio, she served time in the US Navy. She described herself as "outdoorsy" and she enjoys nature, especially sea turtles and birds. She shared that in her previous position she developed a newsletter, and she would like to start one in this position. She has written articles for Chron.com in the past and would like to assist the chapter in getting information and stories related to GBAC activities publicized. Brandi would also like to interpret what we are doing and create things to pass along to the community and stakeholders to highlight the impact we have on the community. She also stated that Gene has been helpful getting her acclimated to her responsibilities as our Chapter Advisor.

- **Vice President (Mary Dobberstine)**

Mary announced the completion of the Annual Financial Records Review. She sent a copy of the report to all Board members. In summary, the findings are that Meade is a very competent Treasurer and our financial records are in good order. She reported that members of the review committee expressed that the process has improved over previous years. Mary expressed a interest in bringing in another Chapter member with a financial background to work with Meade. This would aid in succession planning. She also reported that Meade has been very astute in reconciling "restricted funds", making sure that they are used appropriately.

Mary informed the Board of the Chapter Meeting on June 6th. Debbie Moran is the speaker, and her topic will be "Light Right to Bring Back the Night". Members have the option to attend the meeting in-person or via Zoom.

- **Secretary (Lisa Hardcastle)**

Lisa plans to send a Chapter-wide email out asking for members to contact her with usernames and passwords related to 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*.

- **Treasurer (Meade LeBlanc)**

Due to Meade's absence, Gene suggested we defer any financial discussions until the next meeting in which she is present.

- **Immediate Past President (Pam House)**

Pam shared that she will be out of town until the end of June. When she returns, she will activate the scholarship committee to begin the process of selecting fall scholarship winners.

Director Reports

- **Advanced Training (Mike Petitt)**

Mike shared that the chapter had three advanced trainings in the past month, two via Zoom and one in-person. There are also three advanced trainings coming up in June. He sent a detailed report to Board members prior to the meeting.

- **Communication (Mary Dobberstine)**

Mary reported that the kick-off of the photo contest will be announced at the June Chapter meeting. The contest will start June 15 and finish at the end of July. This will allow winners to be selected prior to the start of the state contest in August. Jesse will assist Mary with the contest. Additionally, Mary mentioned the recent TMN Tuesday training on hand-held video making. She would like to see someone develop videos as a way of highlighting Chapter events. Finally, she shared that the monofilament team is in the process of re-building after the loss of some key members.

- **Justice, Equity, Inclusion and Diversity (Mohammed Nasrullah)**

Mohammed shared that he is collaborating with other chapters to learn and share what others are doing, what is working and what is not working. He also reminded the Board of the upcoming Juneteenth celebration on June 15. The backpack project at ABNC he mentioned at the last meeting is currently on hold due to other projects.

- **Membership (Tracy Walpole)**

Tracy announced that as of May 26, 2024, we have an active member count of 258. In May, members have logged 2,469.75 volunteer service hours so far, as well as 253.5 hours of advanced training. Changes to the VMS system include two new statuses (deceased and associates) and changing *not eligible* to *inactive*. Additionally, 26 of 31 members of the 2024 training class have finished completed at least 40 hours of coursework and six have certified. Penny Bessire has achieved 5,000 volunteer service hours and Chris Roper achieved 1,000 volunteer service hours.

Tracy also discussed progress in finding an appropriate way of recognizing the two members who have achieved 30,000 volunteer service hours. She found acrylic trophies that can be engraved from the same vendor that made our name badges. After a brief discussion about budget items, Gene suggested that Tracy move

forward with the purchase of the trophies and asked Board members if anyone had an objection. There being no objection, Tracy will move forward with the purchase.

- **Outreach (Lisa Hardcastle)**

Lisa was pleased to share that enough people have volunteered for upcoming outreach activities that she has had to turn some people away. There are two upcoming events in June and one in July.

- **Training Class (Diane Humes)**

Diane is pleased that the training class is now completed. Of the 31 members, 26 have completed at least 40 hours of their coursework, six have certified and she expects 10 more to certify by the end of the summer. She would like to thank volunteers at the June Chapter meeting.

- **Volunteer Service (Sharon Tirpak)**

Sharon continues to receive frequent questions regarding what VMS volunteer opportunity to use for different events. She encourages anyone asking for volunteers or announcing activities to include the VMS volunteer opportunity in any communication. She had a specific question about which opportunity to use for child safety training related to Camp Wild. Pam shared that in the past, it was the practice that the training would count as Advanced Training, not Volunteer Service.

Other Reports

- **GetBACKTogether**

No new information.

- **New Class Representatives (Denise Correll and Sydney Jeffcoat)**

Both Denise and Sydney asked what the expectations were for them. Suggestions shared include encouraging their classmates to continue volunteering and attending AT in order to certify, encouraging them to upload their hours into the VMS system, learn more about other positions in the Chapter they may be interested in and send out emails to classmates to facilitate connection as a class.

Old (unfinished) Business

- **Bat Monitoring Software**

Laura shared information via an email to Board members. There are 18 volunteers and 14 sites included in the project. Twenty-four species of bats have been detected, including two critically endangered species and seven vulnerable species. The team has compiled more than 32,000 sonar recordings of the bats. She is appreciative of the support from all involved. Gene announced that a license for the software Laura had requested has been purchased.

New Business

- **Big Thicket Field Trip – Mary**
Mary shared that the trip may be delayed until the fall.
- **June Chapter Meeting**
Items to discuss include the photo contest. Class completion certificates will be handed out. Diane will also thank volunteers who helped with the training class.
- **Annual Meeting**
Information about the hotel went out this week.

Announcements

- Sharon shared that she received a spam email asking her to purchase gift cards for the Chapter. It was discussed that the spammer likely found her personal email address on the Chapter's website. Her email address has since been removed. Mary explained that this was another benefit of using our new gmail accounts, not having personal information on the internet.
- Brandi reiterated that she is happy to be here and learning about what we do.

Review action items - Lisa

None

There being no further business, Sharon moved to adjourn the meeting at 7:15 p.m. There were no objections.

Respectfully submitted,

Lisa Hardcastle