

**Lost Pines Master Naturalist Board Meeting
Minutes
January 8, 2015**

President Julia Akin called the January Board meeting to order at 6:05 p.m. at the Bluebonnet Elective Cooperative in Bastrop. Board members in attendance were: Julia Akin, Mike Barrett, Carroll Moore, Joan Estes, Audrey Ambrose, Beth Freeman, Jim Estes, Larry Gfeller, Rick Johnson, Marsha Elrod, Roxanne Hernandez, Rachael Bauer, and Frank May guest.

Julia stated that she was going to revise the order of business for the meeting and open the first order of business to discuss the opportunity for chapter involvement with the Lost Pines Nature Trails on the Colorado River owned by the Bastrop Caldwell Water Commission Independent District # 2. (BCWCID#2).

Julia provided an overview of the opportunity for LPMN chapter to lease or purchase the land on the Colorado River currently owned by the Pines and Prairie Land Trust. Chapter involvement with PPLT was initiated by Dale Morrison with assistance from Jim Estes and Nick Nichols to clear trails and build a bridge. Project support has grown since 2013 because of to the interest of Frank May and Rob Sutherland in the CRR environment. Approximately four months ago Frank and Dave Hill met with Lost Pines Land Trust (LPLT) to discuss expanding services for the area and to hear about the opportunity presented to LPMN to own or manage the land. They were informed by Dorothy Skarnulis that the Water District had no interest in the responsibility for the Park and she asked if LPMN would be interested in buying or managing the property. Rachael Bauer commented that she could see no reason why LPMN couldn't take responsibility/ownership of the property if the chapter decided to explore this opportunity.

Bastrop County Judge Pape indicated that the County would be interested in owning and managing the property but only if the property and management issues were stabilized. If the conditions were resolved they could consider moving toward ownership. There is a meeting next Monday with the Judge to discuss the options at this time.

Initially the options were for purchase or management of the property. However, Frank proposed that the chapter lease the property for 2 years at \$ 10.00 per year with complete responsibility for the project; this will provide time for the chapter to evaluate the financial and legal impacts for the chapter and determine if this is feasible. The options are property lease, ownership or land management.

Some identified chapter needs were discussed:

1. Purchase Liability Insurance at approximately \$1,500.00 per year.
2. Need for a financial partner for the project at an estimated \$5,000 to \$7,500 per year.
3. A Plan of Action.

Three key issues will need to be addressed; financial, managerial, and future plans (beyond 2 years). It was also suggested that there be a separate committee for the project whether the property was managed, leased or purchased. The members were in consensus that the project should not move forward without a financial partner.

Other issues discussed for the project included;

- The number of Park service hours increase from 575 hours to 750 hours.
- Dale Morrison's memorial for his wife in the Park.
- Increasing number of nature lessons conducted in the Park.
- Increases locations for demonstration gardens.
- Identification of flora and fauna in the Park provided by Liz Pulman

Carroll voiced some issues of concern regarding a flood plain designation in the Park. This may become a problem if making property improvements in the future. Property taxes would not be an issue for the chapter because we are a tax exempt organization; however, it would require a petition for tax exemption for the property at a cost.

Marsha Elrod asked why we need to do this. The primary reason presented as to why we should consider this project for the chapter is that the Park needs more attention to the environmental needs. In addition, this would be a significant project for the chapter providing volunteer hours for members, and finally, it would emphasize one of the key MN goals to protect the eco-system and be land stewards for future generations.

This project would also provide an opportunity to establish a chapter project that we have never had in the past. This would be a first time project of this nature for Master Naturalist because no other chapter has ever engaged in the purchase/lease for full time management of chapter property. This could be a trend setter for the organization.

The liability issue for the Park was again addressed; Rick said that there should be no liability problems for the chapter because Liability coverage would provide the required support to protect the chapter.

Some members questioned the use of a \$30,000 grant given to PPLT for the CRR, but Frank said that the money was already spent and the majority of the money was spent on the CRR project. There will be little or no opportunities for earning money through use of the Park for community recreation.

Roxanne said that she did not doubt the commitment of the current Board regarding the project but would the future Board and LPMN members have the same commitment? In this case, the discussion following indicated that it would be up to the Board/LPMN leadership to lead and maintain commitment to this project and assure that this goal is transferred to training class members in the future.

After significant discussion the most promising action for the project was determined to move forward and initiate action to evaluate leasing of the property with option to purchase in two years. Joan Estes made a motion for LPMN to explore the opportunity to lease the LPNT property, to identify the committee to lead the project, identify the pros and cons of the action and report back to the Board at the March Board meeting with their recommendation and submit a plan of action. Jim Estes seconded the motion and all members voted in favor of the motion. The motion carried. Julia reported that Harry Akin will provide legal support as needed.

Julia asked the members to vote on Incorporating LPMN. This is an essential organizational classification to protect Board members from personal liability in the event of an incident. Larry Gfeller made the motion to Incorporate LPMN and Audrey Ambrose seconded the motion. All members voted in favor of the motion and the motion carried. There will be a \$25.00 fee for chapter Incorporation.

Old Business

Julia said that she had an outstanding issue regarding the Audit Committee Report. She needed a second signature on five checks as required by the Master Naturalist Bylaws. The checks received a second signature in compliance with Bylaws.

New Business

The Bank requires a resolution regarding authorized signatures for the LPMN checking account. This will require removing Grace Pratt, Holly Hallmark and Louise Ridlon from the form and adding Julia Akin, Carroll Moore, and Mike Barrett. Larry Gfeller made a motion to remove Grace, Holly and Louise from the Banks legal signature authorization on file and replace with Julia, Carroll and Mike. Audrey Ambrose seconded the motion. All members voted in favor of the motion and the motion carried.

Julia said she has not been able to finalize the 2015 proposed budget and she asked Carroll to finish the budget and submit it at the next Board meeting. Julia said she has not heard back from the Bridge Maniacs regarding the monthly amount for repair and replacement of personal equipment used on projects. Joan said that she thought that the Bridge Maniacs were going to ask Nick Nichols to suggest an amount but nobody was aware of a proposed monthly cost. The Bridge Maniac Board Members suggested and agreed upon a \$50 monthly expense and they will monitor the expense during the year to determine if this is an appropriate amount. Carroll said he would include a monthly amount in the 2015 budget.

The planning for the 2015 Training Class is in its' final phase with 27-29 potential members. The deadline for submitting the applications and money was today and she still had not heard from two applicants.

Julia said that she was continuing to work on the development of a Junior Master Naturalist program for LPMN. Kelly Alecci and Carol Aragon will be working with her and she was planning on having the project up and running by fall.

Larry provided an overview of chapter projects to identify the impact of the many projects that we support and the many volunteer hours required to meet the project needs.

- McKinney Roughs; hikes, grass gardens, bio-surveys
- Lockhart ISD Science Project 2x year
- Home School Science Project
- Membership conversion to Automated Monitoring MN hours
- Training Class Committee
- LPNT
- Trail Hikes at three State Parks

Joan reported that the chapter will need to develop a comprehensive list of approved chapter projects because the list must be entered into the new program for members to be able to submit volunteer or advanced training hours.

Rachael Bauer reported that she is working with the Master Gardner Program administration to develop and implement a training class for Bastrop-Caldwell County. It is a joint venture between them and the plan to begin the program in September.

Rick Johnson made a motion to adjourn and Jim Estes seconded the motion. All voted in favor of the motion and the motion carried. The meeting adjourned at 8:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Joan Estes Secretary