

Lost Pines Master Naturalist Board Meeting Minutes
March 5, 2015

The Lost Pines Master Naturalist Board Meeting for the month of March took place at Bluebonnet Electric at 6:00 p.m on March 5, 2015. Board members attending the meeting were:

Julia Akin, President
Mike Barrett, Vice President
Carroll Moore, Treasurer
Beth Moore,
Larry Gfeller
Frank May

Also attending the meeting was Barbara Carstens, acting Secretary.

President Akin called the meeting to order and stated that there was not a quorum, due to six Board members who were not in attendance. Mrs. Akin went on to state that there was a great deal of Chapter business to discuss, however no action could be taken. Mrs. Akin also welcomed Frank May, who was the newest Board member.

The first order of business was the meeting minutes from the January 8, 2015 meeting. The minutes could not be approved, however President Akin noted that there were several corrections that were needed which would be conveyed to Mrs. Estes so that the minutes could be presented for approval at the next Board meeting.

In old business, President Akin discussed the requirements of incorporating the Chapter, and how it was much more involved than what she had anticipated. Mrs. Akin also noted that there had been a concern raised regarding how dedicated the next Board would be to the idea of the land lease/purchase. Because of this, Mrs. Akin stated that it was critical to the Chapter that it continue to grow and attract quality members who are dedicated to serving the community.

A discussion then followed regarding things that the Chapter could do to prepare for an increase in membership, activity and community involvement. Larry Gfeller suggested that a meeting be held every January to plan the Chapter's annual housekeeping duties. Carroll Moore suggested that other members be involved in the Chapter's finances. Mr. Gfeller suggested a finance committee be created and President Akin stressed the need for fund raisers, such as the production and sale of a Chapter cookbook. Mr. Moore also suggested that every LPMN email contain LPMN in the subject line and include the Chapter logo if possible. He also thought that it would be helpful to include a link to the Chapter's website. Frank May suggested that every Board member have a business card. President Akin distributed her own business card and stated that they could easily be produced by Bastrop Copy. Mr. Moore also discussed the benefits of the Chapter having the ability to accept credit card payments.

The next item on the Agenda was an update from Frank May regarding the Lost Pines Nature Trail. Mr. May reported that work has begun with Commissioner Bubba Snowden coordinating the replacement of cable and the removal of chinaberry trees. There was however, an issue with the Houston Toad monitor, and also with the Fish and Wildlife Service who stopped the work due to the lack of a required license. Mr. May stated that Commissioner Snowden is committed to completing the job and was confident that the work would be completed by the end of the month.

At that time, President Akin discussed a proposal that she and Mr. May had given to the Water District for the lease of the refuge property for a period of one year. Mrs. Akin stated that there had been opposition to the proposal by Vice President Karen Pinard, due to the amount of traffic it would attract to Tahitian Village, even though the President supported the idea. President Akin also stated that LPMN has already become well known to the County Judge, the H. Judge Pape, who also had an interest in preserving and protecting the Refuge property. Judge Pape, however, had reservations with the LPMN plan due to a bad experience with a previous group which committed to a similar venture but then disappeared. President Akin stated that she believed the Judge wanted to acquire the property for the county. Because of an apparent conflict between the Water District and the County, it was now her recommendation to stay out of the brewing political battle in hopes that the County would be able to purchase the property and allow the LPMN to continue its current role in the improvement and preservation of the property. The Board agreed. Further discussion took place regarding the vision that Mr. May had for the property and what type of opportunities it would provide for Chapter activities. President Akin stated that the project presented a tremendous opportunity to increase the presence of the LPMN in the community, and that Mr. May had cultivated a good relationship with the Game Warden, the Sheriff and the County Commissioners. Mr. Moore suggested that the Chapter picnic be held there, as well as future bird watching field trips. Mr. Gfeller suggested that Jim Estes be asked to lead a hike on the Dragonfly Trail. The discussion was concluded with President Akin thanking Mr. May for his report and his work on the project.

Next on the Agenda was the Financial Report. Carroll Moore distributed the financial statement he had prepared which included a balance sheet and income and expense statement. Mr. Moore discussed the accounts that he had created and asked for the Board's comments and/or suggestions on how the items might be grouped so as to give the Board an accurate picture of the Chapter's financial condition. Since becoming Treasurer, Mr. Moore stated that he now required a written check request (Exhibit A) for reimbursements and also a collection sheet (Exhibit B) for use when collecting funds for the Chapter. If acceptable, Mr. Moore stated that the Financial Statement would be presented to the membership at the regular Chapter Meetings each month, with the back-up pages to be distributed to the Board members. After much discussion, the Board requested that no changes be made to the accounts or to the report, and moved on to discussion of the Budget. Because of the uncertainty regarding the accuracy of prior years' records, Mr. Gfeller recommended that the Board accept the Budget as presented. A discussion regarding the collection of dues followed, with President Akin recommending that a letter be sent to any member who is not current on dues. She also requested the Chapter become more proactive in collecting dues in the future and that members be sent emails in November and

December of each year containing a link to PayPal. It was also recommended that if dues are not paid in a timely manner, those members who have not paid be dropped from the roster, so that membership numbers would be accurate. Mr. Moore also presented to the Board a Sales Tax Exemption Form (Exhibit C), which could be used when purchasing items for LPMN. Following the discussion, President Akin thanked Mr. Moore for his efforts in creating the financial reports and budget.

The next order of business was the Speaker Report from Vice President Mike Barrett. Mr. Barrett presented the Board with an updated list of speakers for 2015 and asked for suggestions from the Board for future speakers. There were suggestions for speakers on Light Pollution, Fracking and Groundwater and Firewise. Mr. Gfeller also stated that Bastrop Gardens may be a resource. The discussion concluded with President Akin thanking Mr. Barrett for his efforts in securing quality speakers for the year.

Next, President Akin gave the Board an update on the 2015 training class. Mrs. Akin stated that as a group, the average age was much younger than previous classes, and that they had an energy about them that was quite different from other classes. Several students had started a blog about their training classes and what it was like to be a Master Naturalist, and other students were initiating advanced training opportunities by arranging field trips. Mrs. Akin stated that she would be reminding members about the blog at the next Chapter meeting.

A short discussion followed regarding recruitment of trainees. President Akin suggested that referrals for new members by existing chapter members be rewarded in some way.

The next order of business was a discussion regarding the date of the April Board Meeting. Mrs. Akin proposed a start time of 5:00 on either April 2nd or April 9th. A communication would be sent to the Board members to determine which date would be best. Mrs. Akin then passed out a redline version of the Chapter Bylaws to review prior to the next meeting, and also stated that recommendations for changes to the LPMN Handbook would be on the Agenda.

At that time President Akin opened the floor to further discussion. Larry Gfeller inquired if the Bridge Maniacs would allow the 14 year old son of a trainee to participate in work detail with the Bridge Maniacs. After a discussion, it was decided that Mr. Gfeller would offer other opportunities to the young man due to the fact that the Bridge Maniacs worked with potentially dangerous power tools. President Akin stated that she would be working on a release form to be presented at the next Board meeting which would need to be approved by the Board but could serve as a parent's consent and indemnify the Chapter for minors' volunteer work for the Chapter.

President Akin then stated that there was no further business and the meeting was adjourned at 8:25 p.m.

Barbara J. Carstens
Acting Secretary