

GBAC-TMN Board Meeting Minutes  
September 29, 2020  
Zoom Board Meeting

Attendees:

Susette Mahaffey, George Kyame, Mike Petitt, Janet Mason, Cindy Liening, Pam House, Patty Trimmingham, Maureen Nolan-Wilde, Ellen Gerloff, Jo Monday, Walter Meyer, Leann Criswell (alternate voting in Kristie's absence), and Sponsor Julie Massey

Absent:

Kristie Huffman

Visitors:

Robin Kendrick-Yates and Christine LaChance

This represents 100% of voting members present.

The meeting was called to order by President Susette Mahaffey at 1:02 pm. She welcomed the board to the Zoom meeting.

BOARD REPORTS (partial):

Patty: Membership

Patty's report was taken out of order in order to accommodate her need to depart the meeting early. She reported 184 impacts for the month of September which was an increase over August. Much of this was due to Armand Bayou Youth Camp and Ford Hubbert's efforts. Volunteer service was up for the month, but AT was a little less. All was lower than last year, as expected. Six or seven more members have recertified. Carter Davis has earned his 500 hour pin.

Patty reported on the website review that was completed by Maureen, Chuck Snyder, Pam, and Patty. The conclusion was that our site was in very good shape and that only minor changes were recommended. Patty has begun to implement those changes with some rearrangement of the tabs across the top, "How to Become a Master Naturalist" added, "Monofilament" removed from tabs and included as a link from "What We Do." On the home page the mission statement was made more prominent and our motto of "Food, Fun and Friendship" was added. She will be working next on the "What We Do" page to make it more concise. Susette mentioned that all Word Press trainings have been cancelled for now until a new trainer is in place.

Patty was asked to determine the total number of Beach Hero project hours reported and the number of people who posted hours to that project. Susette and Maureen will use that information with their Beach Hero presentation for the Texas Master Naturalists state meeting.

## OLD BUSINESS:

1. The September 1, 2020 minutes that had been emailed to the board members were offered for discussion. A motion was made by Cindy and seconded by Mike to approve the minutes as submitted. The motion passed unanimously.
2. Disaster Planning Team  
Maureen reviewed the suggested framework for the disaster response developed by the team. The tentative outline provides the following: The Membership Director on the board will be involved in developing the written plan and storing it in Google docs. The Vice President will be in charge of communications. The core team will be comprised of all the board members. Going forward, the board members will need to know how to use Google docs. A review of the plan should be included in the Board Day Away. (Susette gave the newest board members an explanation of the Board Day Away which takes place sometime after the election as a board get together to plan for the next year.)

Discussion of the framework included information provided by Maureen as to how the chapter had responded during Hurricane Harvey. Patty reported that the spreadsheet that was sent out this year when Hurricane Laura was approaching was just a listing of the members. In the future, the idea is that board members would be pre-assigned to contacts and would act as part of the tree of communication. Julie reminded us that there will be things asked of us to do that might not be appropriate, but the expression of concern may be important even in those circumstances. Walter hoped there would be assistance with learning how to use Google docs. Susette reiterated that the main thrust of the plan was to make sure someone in the group was available to forward requests from members. Cindy states that by dividing up the contact responsibilities among the board, it would become manageable.

Pam made a motion to adopt the suggested framework for the chapter disaster plan, Jo seconded. The motion was passed unanimously. Cindy, Janet, Patty, and Maureen were thanked for their work in developing the plan.

## NEW BUSINESS

Robin began an informational report on the work being done by the Diversity and Inclusion Group. He thanked the leadership for their initiative on the issue this year.

He discussed the history of addressing diversity within the chapter and provided a review of what the Diversity and Inclusion Group planned to present at the chapter meeting on October 1. It would include asking what is meant by diversity, why we should care about it, and suggest that the chapter should draft a diversity statement. Susette, Meade LeBlanc, Christine LaChance, Mike Petitt, Ruth and Mohammed Nasrullah, Luxie Mohammed, and Sara Snell had joined with him to form the group.

Christine stressed that the group was coming not from a place that the chapter has been doing anything wrong, but rather a desire to be more proactive toward inclusiveness. There was recognition that getting out into nature is a privilege that is not available to

large segments of the population. Mike emphasized that the committee wanted to speak not just to aspirations, but that they wanted to affect some real changes. Susette indicated that chapters were urged at the state Presidents' meetings to continue to focus on achieving more diversity. Walter explained his experience through the UTMB schools that achieving a diversity match within the institution to the community took about twenty years.

There was general discussion about methods to achieve greater diversity in the new class applicant pool. Some ideas mentioned were approaching churches in communities not currently being represented, using our science community contacts, and perhaps offering the classes differently such as at different times of day.

## BOARD REPORTS (Continued)

### 1. Susette: President

Susette gave a summary of the state Presidents' meeting. Most of the information was about the upcoming state meeting. Approximately 800 were registered for the meeting which would be using the WebEx format. Written chat will not be available using that platform. Registration is due to close Friday (October 2). There will be a help desk available for use of WebEx. The registration fee is \$55. Virtual presentations and field trips will be available. The Agri Life bookstore will be available online. Maureen has sent in 12 photos for the photo contest which will be on Saturday afternoon at 3 pm.

There will be a statewide town hall meeting on October 7 at 8 pm open to all. The virtual volunteer fair which was held last month had 650 to 900 participants. The COVID limits are still in place limiting face to face meetings to 50% of capacity, or 50 people maximum. Face coverings and list of people participating at in person gatherings or volunteer activities are required. The lists are for contact tracing and are to be retained for one year.

Susette then led a review of our chapter's goals which had been set for 2020:

1. *State TMN Conference Registration Desk and Help Desk*  
This was to be our responsibility at the state conference. It was not possible due to COVID requirement of a virtual conference.
2. *Project of the Year: Beach Hero*  
Done
3. *Work to partner with other chapters for AT and VMS opportunities*  
Opened AT to Master Gardeners
4. *Community Natural Resources Education Programs*  
Came to a halt due to COVID. The Emeritus program and the Diversity and Inclusion project proceeded.
5. *Showcase to membership available opportunities and services being provided by volunteers and to educate and motivate members to increase involvement and ownership of chapter activities.*  
Was not undertaken in a formal way but through AT and the communications team expansion of social media presence.

6. *Archive Chapter Documents*

The committee has met once and will meet again. Digital documents have been archived, but scanning has been delayed until COVID allows.

Generally, we have done a good job in addressing the goals. Susette expressed her appreciation to all of the board members for their efforts.

2. George: Past President

George expressed his well wishes and hopes for health to all. The scholarship committee is planning to meet soon and he will check with the scholarship recipient to see when the funds should be paid to her school.

3. Mike: Vice President

Mike will arrange a disaster planning meeting. Texas Invaders will be presenting the AT at the Thursday (October 1) chapter meeting. He would like to invite Bev Morrison and Chatt Smith from the Gulf Coast Chapter to the meeting. Susette suggested that he might contact Dr. Chris Marshall about presenting the AT for the February meeting.

4. Pam: Secretary

No report.

5. Cindy: Treasurer

Reviewed the financials that she had previously sent out to the board members.

Pam made a motion to approve the financials, Maureen seconded. The vote in favor was unanimous.

Cindy reviewed the proposed budget. She explained that the budgeting was based on real projections and that a slight deficit was anticipated. The chapter reserves would be easily sufficient to cover the deficit. Ellen reminded the board that there had been discussion in the past that the chapter should have a zero based budget, but that didn't preclude using money in the reserves as the need arrived.

There was discussion as to whether an amount needed to be budgeted for diversity outreach. Julie indicated that needed supplies, such as binoculars for youth oriented birding groups, could be provided by Agri Life.

6. Jo: Volunteer Service

Nothing new to report.

7. Ellen: Advanced Training

There was a very entertaining AT on September 17 on Raptors presented by Erich Neupert from the Blackland Prairie Raptor Center with live birds. Although it was not a GBAC sponsored AT, the Zoom team did an amazing job running the September 23 meeting for the Gulf Center for Sea Turtle Research. There were more than 400 participants and it ran smoothly. The scheduled presentation on diamond-back terrapins

is postponed from September 30 until November 19. Unfortunately, it had already been published in *The Midden* with instructions to register with Emmeline Dodd, which is not necessary. Ellen contacted Emmeline to apologize for any inconvenience to her.

In October there are many presentations that qualify for AT offered at the state conference, by the Native Plant Society of Texas and by other organizations.

The next planned AT will be on October 26 of the Texas Oyster Mariculture Industry. Additional AT is planned for November 4 and November 11.

8. Janet: New Class

No new information.

9. Maureen: Communications

The photo contest winners will be announced at the chapter meeting on Thursday (October 1).

The Zoom team wanted to be sure to give special praise to Chuck Snyder for the work involved in running the Zoom meeting for Texas A&M.

The Beach Hero project will be videoing for the state meeting presentation. Bruce Niebuhr, Chuck Snyder, Alan Wilde, Carlos Rios, Keith and Susette Mahaffey, and Maureen are participating in the presentation.

A practice run through for the chapter meeting is planned for tomorrow (September 30). Susette commented that the speaker will start at 7:00 pm for the chapter meeting, not earlier, even if the previous agenda doesn't completely fill the time. At the December meeting, we are still planning to do awards, new class graduation, and Treasures of the Bay. We will also discuss plans for 2021 as the anniversary year of the chapter.

10. Walter & Leann: Class Representatives

Although no class activities were reported, a review of Leann's office environment (cold and humid) entertained us.

11. Julie: Chapter Sponsor

Will be sending out nomination information for Treasures of the Bay. The Ocean Science Bowl plans are proceeding. She is hoping to host the Dolphin and Loggerhead challenge. They are aiming for Saturdays in February and March. The COVID schedule remains in place at the office: she and Joanna alternating one week in the office and one week away.

**OTHER BUSINESS**

None

#### WRAP-UP

The next meeting will be November 3 at 1:00 pm. Susette will try to meet with this year's class reps about the December meeting. Planning will begin about the anniversary year. She doesn't see things changing for virtual meeting requirements until vaccines are widely available.

Motion to adjourn was made by Mike, seconded by Janet. Motion approved unanimously. Susette adjourned the meeting at 2:45 pm.

Respectfully submitted,  
Pam House