

GBAC BOARD DAY AWAY 2025 MEETING
Armand Bayou Nature Center Education Classroom
January 25, 2025

Attendees: Mary Dobberstine, Jenny Dudley, Meade LeBlanc, Lisa Hardcastle, Gene Fisseler, Sharon Tirpak, Robin Novak, Julie Massey, Mohammed Nasrullah, and Denise Correll.

Absent members were Tracy Walpole, Terri Bell, and Brandi Keller.

Also in attendance was Christine Anastas.

Mary Dobberstine, President, notified members of the meeting date and agenda via email on December 9, 2024.

Mary called the meeting to order at 10:00 AM.

The quorum requirement was established by Lisa Hardcastle, Secretary.

Welcome and Opening Remarks

Mary welcomed everyone and reviewed the agenda. There were no additions or comments. Members then introduced themselves and shared an activity they volunteer in with the group.

Old Business

Review and approval of minutes:

The minutes of the November board meeting that had been previously emailed to the board were offered for discussion. **A motion was made by Gene to approve the November board meeting minutes as written and seconded by Sharon. The motion passed unanimously.**

A copy of the minutes of the December chapter meeting were shared with board members and offered for discussion. **A motion to approve the December chapter meeting minutes as written was made by Jenny and seconded by Robin. The motion passed unanimously.**

Election of Officers

Gene then shared with the board an error that was made prior to the December chapter meeting. Per our chapter bylaws, the slate of officer nominations is to be presented to the chapter membership in writing or by electronic means at least 15 days prior to the last general membership meeting of the year. This was not done. Therefore, the election on December 2, 2025, will be offered for ratification by chapter members at the February

chapter meeting. The posting of the nominees at the December meeting satisfies the bylaws.

Board Confirmation of Director Appointments

On January 21, Mary sent an email to the newly elected officers, the immediate past president, and the advisor, putting forward two new board member candidates for consideration: Julie Massey, Training Director and Robin Novak, Advanced Training Director. The response was unanimous that these appointments be approved.

Conflict of Interest Policy Acknowledgement

Lisa shared with the board the conflict-of-interest policy outlined in the chapter by-laws via email on January 15, 2025. Board members are asked to sign an attestation reflecting that they have received a copy of the conflict-of-interest policy, have read and understand the policy, have agreed to comply with policy and understands the organization is charitable and in order to maintain its federal tax exemption it must engage primarily in activities that accomplish one or more of its tax-exempt purposes. She asked that attestations be signed and returned to her by February 1, 2025.

Change of Committee Name

Mary shared with the board that she had spoken with Mohammed about the work the JEDI committee has been doing. The committee members have recommended the name of the committee be changed to the "Community Engagement Team" to better reflect its current work and mission. Mary proposed to the executive committee, via email, the change, as well as a change to the director's title. The executive committee agreed to the change via email response.

A motion to change the name of the Justice, Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion committee to the Community Engagement committee was made by Gene. The motion was seconded by Jenny. The motion passed unanimously.

New Class Representatives

Mary reported that Sydney Jeffcoat is no longer able to perform the duties of New Class Representative. Terri Bell, currently the alternate class representative, will assume the role.

Financial Records Examination Committee

Mary reminded the board about the requirement to conduct an annual examination of the financial records of the chapter. Per the Chapter Operating Handbook, the vice-president, secretary, training class representative, and chapter advisor constitute the committee. Denise agreed to be on the committee. Meade will prepare materials for the committee and meet with them on February 6, prior to the chapter meeting. She will give them the materials and explain the process. Results will be shared with the board at a future date.

New Business

HEB Pollinators for Texas Grant

Mary was excited to report the award of a \$3,000.00 grant from the *HEB Pollinators for Texas Grant* program. The project submitted by our chapter is a native plant garden at Exploration Green and titled *Putting the 3 in 3A*. Lynn Porfirio is leading the project and has already begun preparing the beds for planting. Information on the project will be shared with the chapter and community soon. The grant money will be given to the chapter, and the chapter will reimburse expenses for the project.

Chapter Leadership Reports:

President (Mary Dobberstine)

Mary began by sharing the chapter's organization chart and a list of chapter committees and their leads.

Next, Mary provided updates from the state:

- The 2023-year end report was shared by the state. Highlights include:
 - 553,106 volunteer hours were reported by members, worth more than \$12.7 million.
 - Members participated in 78,794 hours of advanced training.
 - Members impacted over 251,000 community members.
- New branding guidelines will come out in 2025.
- Updates will be made to the Volunteer Management System in 2025.
- On April 8, the TMN Tuesday Virtual Showcase will be presented.

Our February meeting will highlight new opportunities including the chapter's bat project and the Exploration Green project. Additionally, David Gwin will introduce the *Time to Restore: A Multi-State Citizen Science Project to Connect People, Plants and Pollinators* project at the February chapter meeting.

Finally, Mary reminded the board of the relationship the chapter has with the Agrilife Extension Office. The extension office provides our chapter advisor and financial support, such as office materials, printing and copying and meeting space. In addition, the extension agent submits a report to the community highlighting what our chapter does.

Vice-President (Jenny Dudley)

Jenny shared that she is excited to assume the role of chapter vice-president. She has already lined up speakers for most of our chapter meetings.

Secretary (Lisa Hardcastle)

Lisa reminded members of the importance of reviewing board meeting minutes that she will be sharing with them monthly. This streamlines the approval process during the meeting. She will also update the password list that must be done annually.

Advanced Training Director (Robin Novak)

Robin summarized highlights of last year's advanced training offerings. The five offerings with the highest attendance were *Ghost Wolves*, *The Karankawa People of the Texas Gulf Coast: Facts, Fictions, and Forgotten Histories*, *Diurnal Raptors*, *13 Things You Need to Know About Poison Oak and Ivy Rash*, and *Opossums*. Based on data, members prefer AT opportunities at 6 PM, rather than 2 PM. They also prefer Zoom presentations over in-person presentations.

Volunteer Service Director (Sharon Tirpak)

Sharon reviewed an updated list of opportunities she has been working on. She is attempting to reduce redundancy and clarify opportunity descriptions. She has also added new opportunities based on new projects. She also reported on the Excel spread-sheet project listing our partners and groups that we work with. This spread sheet includes a brief description of volunteer activities and a person to contact for more information. It was suggested that she meet with Mary, Tracy, and Patty Trimmingham to obtain additional support for the project.

Membership Director (Tracy Walpole)

Tracy was unable to attend but shared a report with members prior to the meeting. This report included the following information as of January 5, 2025:

- 664 members have been trained through our program.
- 245 members are considered active (certified and logged hours).
- Nine members are in training.
- One person recently transferred into our chapter.
- Year-to-date volunteer hours have decreased slightly from last year.
- Year-to-date advanced training hours have decreased slightly from last year.
- December impact hours include 322 impacts.
- 2024 training class update – 28 of 31 finished class, 18 have certified, nine are working on certification.
- Liz VanOrstrand has reached 1000 hours of volunteer service.
- Nicole Cloutier and Janet Diaz have reached 250 hours of volunteer service.

Chapter Advisor (Brandi Keller)

Brandi was unable to attend, but Mary shared notes from her. The Dolphin Challenge event is slated for February 1. There is a training session for it on Monday from 2 – 4. The Texas Sea Grant 2-day training program on January 21-22, 2025, has been postponed.

Community Engagement Director (Mohammed Nasrullah)

Mohammed shared that the team meets monthly on the first Monday of the month at 3:00 via Zoom. He also read the mission statement and vision statement. Highlights from last year include events at ABNC, *Outdoors for All* event at REI, Juneteenth celebration, and a community advanced training on the Karankawas that had 111 attendees. Future plans include tours of the Heritage Foundation in Houston on March 13, Juneteenth celebration in Galveston, Earth Day celebration on April 27, and a goal of three community advanced trainings over the next three months.

Outreach Coordinator (Lisa Hardcastle)

Accomplishments of the outreach team over the past year include the creation of eleven outreach kits, an on-line check out form for the kits, an event planning document and participation in ten community outreach events. The team will have its first meeting of the year on January 28, and goals for 2025 will include reactivation of the Speakers Bureau, participation in more outreach events, adding a few more outreach kits, and enlisting more volunteers.

It was decided that setting up an “outreach table” at our chapter meetings, displaying our kits and how to volunteer at activities, may encourage more volunteers.

Communication Director (Mary Dobberstine)

Mary was excited to announce that our Facebook page has 2,678 followers. She reminded board members of the following contacts, Facebook – Chloe Dannenfelser, Media – Brandi Keller, Constant Contact – Alan Wilde, Smug Mug – Chuck Snyder, and Google – Mary Dobberstine. Mary also shared that the chapter now has an Instagram account, which will reach a younger and more diverse audience than current efforts. She is still interested in finding someone to serve as the Communication Director.

New Class Representatives (Denise Correll, Terri Bell)

Denise reported the new class’s progress: 28 of 31 members have completed training requirements, eighteen have completed certification requirements and nine are working towards certification. She continues to encourage classmates to complete their certification requirements. In addition, Terri has reached out to individuals who have struggled with entering service hours in the Volunteer Management System.

Training Class Director (Julie Massey)

Julie announced that the chapter has received 32 applications for the spring class. She anticipates that a few more will come in over the next few days via the mail. The new class will begin on February 20 and will meet during the day on Thursdays. A trip to Sea Center Texas has been added to the curriculum, as well as a lesson on ethics in wildlife and fishery management and one on oysters. The volunteer luncheon has been rescheduled for this Thursday, January 30.

Gene added that he emphasized with attendees at the Meet and Greet that the intent of the program is to train volunteers, not just to learn about Texas's natural resources. He was also pleased to report that several applicants are from our nonprofit partners.

Immediate Past President (Gene Fisseler)

Gene reviewed the chapter's 2024 goals and progress made:

- Look for opportunities to share TMN training with local teachers - for example, open invitations to ZOOM Advanced Training offerings, conducting a TMN-hosted, one-day field experience at Armand Bayou Nature Center, Galveston Island State Park, or Exploration Green.
 - Partially completed, we will continue to work on this goal.
- Conduct a GBAC-wide volunteer service/social event – for example, a GBAC-only Prairie Planting, a GBAC-only beach clean-up with American Bird Conservancy, or a GBAC-only Marsh Mania event with Galveston Bay Foundation.
 - Completed, a Texas City Dike clean-up event was held on October 5.
- Explore and assess amendments to Chapter governing documents to allow New Class Representatives to continue board service with different roles through the end of the calendar year.
 - Completed, the board passed a motion on 3/26/24 to do this.
- Welcome, and help transition in, a new Chapter Advisor.
 - Completed, Brandi Keller is our new Chapter Advisor and many chapter members assisted in her transition into the role.
- Carry forward objectives from 2023:
 - Continue Outreach Committee focused efforts on development, coordination, and support of outreach presentations made by Chapter members to other organizations and the community.
 - Continue focus on JEDI, identifying volunteer opportunities for weekends, evenings, and at home, and by adding a JEDI component to all programs.
 - Continue to implement/standardize our recently revitalized Scholarship Committee framework.
 - Completed/continuing – three scholarships were awarded at the end of the year and efforts continue in all other areas.

Treasurer (Meade LeBlanc)

Meade reviewed the end of year financial statement. Expenses exceeded income, but the board had previously approved spending down the cash balance. Major expenditures include new class expenses, which are paid for by the cost of the class; chapter meetings, including purchasing new name tags for all members and insurance/operating costs; outreach expenses; and stewardship expenses. The student scholarships announced at

the December meeting will be reflected in the 2025 budget as the funds will be awarded in January.

Mary made a motion to accept the 2024 Year End Financial Report as presented. Sharon seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Meade then presented the proposed 2025 budget, which showed minimal changes in expected income, a reduction in chapter activity costs, and an increase in the budgeted amounts for outreach and stewardship compared to the 2024 actuals.

After discussion about the budget, **Jenny made a motion to approve the 2025 budget as presented and create a line item to balance the budget in the amount of \$13,805. Mary seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.**

Lunch Break and Strategic Planning Session

The board adjourned for lunch at 12:15. This was followed by a brainstorming activity and goal setting for 2025. Mary will share the goals with the board in February.

Other Business

Mary shared the 2025-chapter meeting schedule and the 2025 board meeting schedule. After some discussion it was decided to change the board meeting time and dates and time to the last Tuesday of the month at 6:30 PM.

Meade gave each board member a copy of the GBAC Expense Guidelines and GBAC Reimbursement Request Form and asked that they be shared with committee members and used for all reimbursement requests.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 2:16 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Lisa Hardcastle