

March 28, 2022 Minutes for Meeting of Board of Hill County Chapter, Texas Master Naturalists

Place: Riverside Nature Center & Zoom

Time: 2:30 p.m.

Present In Person:

Carla Stang, Frank Garcia, Ron Scoggins, Alice King, Carra Milikien, Dot Maginot, Trudy Eberhardt, Elsa Roberts, Vern Crawford

Present on Zoom

Diana Gierisch

Not Present

Tom Burke

Action Items Summary:

Carla to query project leads to see if any would like their projects to be highlighted as a volunteer opportunity at a Chapter meeting.

Carla, Carra, and Dot to schedule a mentor meeting to review any issues that may have come up now that class is underway.

Carla to send a link to a VMS Administrative training class to Diane.

A special meeting for 2023 new class(es) proposal should be held, to include a discussion of the timing of applications, cost/benefits, and that Karolyn Andrews (from Schreiner University) should be included.

March 28, 2022 Minutes for Meeting of Board of Hill County Chapter, Texas Master Naturalists

Carla called the meeting to order at 2:30.

Approval of Minutes

On motion by Carra, seconded by Frank, the minutes of the February 28 Board meeting were unanimously approved.

REPORTS

Treasurer – Ron Scoggins

Ron reviewed February transactions, noting that largest expenditures were related to the new class for speaker fees and materials. Ron also noted that charges for merchandise were related to orders placed over a year ago. Ron reported that the vendor does not charge until the orders are fully shipped and orders had been delayed.

Ron reported that he had not yet been able to get quotes from the insurance agent for general liability and D&O coverages even though he had been following up with her. Given that the current insurance was set to expire before the next Board meeting the Board voted unanimously to authorize Ron and Carla to purchase policies without convening a Board meeting if the premiums were in line with the amounts expected.

Vice President – Frank Garcia

Frank extended an invitation to Board members and spouses to resume the tradition of having dinner with the Chapter meeting speaker at Rails, noting that the Chapter would pay for the speaker's dinner and the Board members would pay for their own dinners. Frank noted that he was working to fill speaker spots for May, June and July and had reached out to Texas Parks and Wildlife contacts for leads. He explained that his goal was to bring in speakers on new topics but also felt it worthwhile to bring in speakers on topics that had been covered to reinforce the information previously presented. Carla noted that her member survey will include questions on desired topics for Chapter meetings. Elsa suggested having a speaker on wildfire safety. Carra noted the names of several speakers that had been well received by the new class. Carra also described a process adopted by the New Class Committee of inviting a project lead to come to each class to pitch for volunteers during the break (with a brief introduction by Carra in her opening remarks) and recommended this kind of process for the Chapter meeting. Carla took an action item to send a query project leads to see if any would like to do this.

Membership – Dot Maginot

Dot noted that there had been a slowdown in inquiries about joining a class, as would be expected given that the new class was now underway. Dot reported that she was focused on pin distribution. There was a brief discussion of whether the new class members had generally mastered VMS and Carla noted that she was getting reports and could let Carra know if she spotted issues. Carra noted that class members seemed to be going directly to her rather than their mentors for issues that could be better handled by mentors. Carla explained that in past years a second mentor meeting had been held after class was underway to go over any issues. Carla, Carra, and Dot took an action item to set up a mentor meeting.

Advanced Training – Diane Gierisch

Diane reported that she was offering fewer webinars and more in-person AT. She noted that although she asked for feedback in her AT announcements email she had not been getting any. She noted that the calendar glitch had been resolved. Carla noted that 715 AT hours and 4385 volunteer hours had been reported in February by the active members (current active member count of 162). There was a discussion of the data available via the VMS system. Carla took an action item to send a link to a VMS Administrative training class to Diane.

Communications – delivered by Carla Stang

Carla commented on Catherine's social media report noting that it reflected good usage. The meeting discussed various details around the use of social media (which services, shared posting process for Facebook and Instagram) and whether print media was effective. Carla noted that she was still trying to fill the Communications Director role. Carla said she was still waiting on the TMN President's Slack channel to be implemented and would use that to query other chapters on whether and how they publish financial information to membership, among other things. Carla noted that she was working with MacKenzie (webmaster) on the best process for updates. The Board generally agreed that hybrid Chapter meetings were now the norm going forward.

Projects – delivered by Carla Stang in Tom Burke's absence

Carla reported that there had not been any updates from Tom on special fund project designations. Carla noted that Kristie Denbow was preparing a report of hours per project that would be informative about how active projects were.

New Class Training – Carra Milikien

Carra summarized progress on a possible Fall Class noting that it would not be held this Fall but could be planned for the Fall of 2022. Dot noted she had emailed the 57 individuals on the “interested” list and 13 had expressed a preference for Spring and 4 for Fall. Carra stated that she felt that a smaller class size for a first time Fall class would be o.k. and that additional interested persons might be identified if recruiting information included this as an option. She recommended that the Chapter start marketing this Fall for a Spring and Fall class in 2023. Carla noted that a special meeting for new class issues was needed, to include a discussion of the timing of applications, and that Karolyn Andrew should be included.

General

Elsa reported on the preparations for the Spring plant sale, noting that they had 45 volunteers so far but that more docents were needed.

Trudy shared photos of one of the wooden bowls that she was carving for a speaker gift.

The meeting discussed whether Chapter members should be permitted to sell books or other merchandise at Chapter meetings and generally agreed that this should not be permitted, except that the speaker for a given meeting could offer a book that they had written.

The Board reviewed the submissions for the Chapter’s 20th anniversary t-shirt and unanimously selected a winner.

The meeting revisited the topic of hybrid meetings to discuss whether Zoom and Facebook Livestream were both needed and agreed that the services reached different audiences based on their connectivity, and that Facebook also helped keep the Zoom head count down (below 100, which is our current subscription maximum size).

Carla reported that a member had noted a concern that her recent email about the TCEQ pristine streams petition might be considered political advocacy, and described guidance she had sought and received on this from the State. Will communicate language from bylaws concerning advocacy as an individual vs TMN member with members at chapter meeting and email to members.

There was a brief discussion of the GVTC and Windstream internet service provides sending the Chapter’s email to members spam folders and the process to “white list” the Chapter.

Carla reviewed the “Year of Celebration Plan” and discussed the bio blitz concept and the joint commencement/anniversary party planned at Joshua Springs (to include approved AT’s, food trucks). Dot reported on her work to create a graduation video. Carla described a project to capture oral histories of early Texas Master Naturalists.

There was a brief discussion of organizing field trips for members.

On Elsa’s motion, seconded by Frank, the meeting adjourned at 4:05.

Minutes taken and submitted by: Alice King, with edits by Carla Stang