

Texas Master Naturalist Hill Country Chapter Annual Board Meeting  
January 9, 2021

The 2021 annual board meeting commenced at 9 a.m. via Zoom with the following members in attendance: Elsa Roberts (President), Katy Kappel (Vice President), Nancy Scoggins (Treasurer), Jeralyn Hathorn (Secretary), Carla Stang (Membership Director), Deb Youngblood (AT Director), Sheryl Pender (Class Director), Catherine Gauldin (Communications Director), Tom Burke (Projects Director), Billy Guin (Class Representative), Vern Crawford (State Representative) and Darryl Pitts (IT Director). Lisa Flanagan (Immediate Past President) was not present but voted by proxy and provided comments in advance of the meeting to Elsa Roberts.

The first item to be addressed was the funds needed by Gracie Wagner to facilitate the snack plates for the first meeting of the new class. An example of how the plates would be presented at the event was submitted to the board. Elsa reminded us that historically the board is responsible for providing the food and covering the cost of this event. The plates will be wrapped in TXMN bandanas, which have already been purchased for \$145. Elsa suggested reclassifying the expense from "Merchandise" (2020) to "New Class" (2021) and the board members would each pay \$20 to cover the remaining amount. Katy moved that each board member would send a check made out to TXMN for \$20 to Nancy Scoggins, 105 High Sierra, Boerne, TX 78006 and the expense of the bandanas in the amount of \$145 will be reappropriated to the new class expense. Carla seconded the motion and a poll was created. The motion/poll unanimously passed.

Billy Guin, class representative, formally introduced himself and was welcomed by the board.

Elsa briefly addressed the board and spoke about the fact that as volunteers we have to recognize that being a board member is a job and encouraged us to work together to lead our chapter on a strategic path to success. She encouraged us to be flexible and creative in our approach in order to continue to operate as a chapter. She concluded with reiterating the TXMN mission statement and emphasized the areas of importance such as education, outreach and service dedicated to the beneficial management of natural resources.

### **2020 PRIORITIES**

The board addressed the priorities that were previously set for 2020 and provided insight regarding the challenges faced and successes achieved.

**1. Grant Writing** – Katy spoke to the board regarding this topic and explained that due to COVID we were not able meet our objective of soliciting volunteers to write grants because as a board our efforts were redirected to other areas such as providing ATs, new class structure and how to cope with COVID guidelines. A letter of intent to submit a grant request for new IT/AV equipment was sent to the Cailloux Foundation but it was not accepted. We did end up upgrading the computer.

#### **Recommendations for 2021:**

- A. Place a call to action in the newsletter for grant writers.
- B. Stay engaged with members who have donation matching agreements with their employers (Hilburn-Exxon Mobil).
- C. Explore other resources.

**2. Finances/Budget and Donors** – Plant sale and Apache Tree Grant were a great success and they proved that education and fundraising go hand in hand. Katy shared with the board that the reason the 2019 Volunteer Appreciation Dinner silent auction was a success was because she perused the new member bios and reached out to those who had "skills" for donations. She also feels it's important to define and let others know what the donations will be used for. Currently the budget is in good shape but Elsa anticipates that expenses will continue to increase.

### **Recommendations for 2021:**

- A. Explore new ways to communicate and increase visibility of TXMN as a way to encourage donations.
- B. Add a Square donation button to the web site – Nancy will work on links/buttons.
- C. Add a marketplace for TXMN merchandise to the web site and link to it from Facebook.
- D. Online auction on the web site for members to be able to donate items for sale and buyers will coordinate with sellers for pick up.
- E. In response to informing the membership as to where their donations are being spent, Nancy will provide a condensed budget report at chapter meetings starting in January.
- F. Use all available avenues to remind members to donate through Amazon Smile. Also get the word out to the public.
- G. Continue with Silent Auction at Volunteer Recognition event.

**3. VMS** – Tom feels that the previous issues with VMS have been successfully addressed and it no longer needs attention. This was partly due to the project leads being more prescriptive in how to word entries thereby eliminating the need to make corrections.

### **Recommendations for 2021:**

- A. Sheryl has already made allowances in the new class schedule that will adequately prepare the new students for VMS use.
- B. Mentors will also absorb individual training duties if and where needed.

**4. Communications/Publicity** – Catherine went down the list, addressed each item and offered her thoughts on how to go forward in 2021.

### **Recommendations for 2021:**

- A. Catherine proposes that we no longer print two different sets of rack cards (a general one and one for the new class). She feels like a general brochure pointing to YouTube, Facebook and the web site would serve us better.
- B. Catherine will contact Becky at RNC about radio ads.
- C. Catherine will look into a street banner.
- D. Catherine and the board will continue to explore ways to encourage members to share photos, utilize Facebook, the website and Youtube. Nancy suggested setting up an Instagram account that would link to Facebook.
- E. Different ways to encourage the general membership to use state and chapter websites will be explored. Carla commented that all new students will be directed to the general Facebook page.
- F. Catherine expressed concern that all visitor posts are going to the “community” page and not the feed on Facebook. She is also frustrated that there has been very little to no activity by the actual membership. Darryl agreed to be the administrator of the Facebook page and take a look to see if he could make it more user friendly.
- G. Catherine would like to do more Facebook lives, at least one every two weeks, to highlight ongoing projects. She’s willing to make contact with project directors and set up live feeds and welcomes topic ideas. Carla suggested showing a short five to seven minute video at the membership meeting. Tom also volunteered to reach out to project leaders letting them know Catherine is looking for content. Phone interviews were also suggested. Deb agreed to do a video on the AT approval process. Darryl suggested setting up a podcast with a podcast service and agreed to help Catherine with the details. When they are ready they will make a presentation to the board.

**5. Membership Growth and Retention** – Ideas were discussed about the challenges that COVID has presented.

### **Recommendations for 2021:**

- A. Lisa suggested highlighting projects that can be done alone on the project list. Carla suggested making it easier to identify those types of projects. Tom agreed to write an article pertaining to the projects for the newsletter.
- B. The 15-Clicks document to learn the web site was discussed.
- C. Sheryl indicated that our chapter could do an AT on Citizen Science projects available.
- D. Elsa suggested an AT on the use of Zoom.

E. Carla provided data showing initial certification and re-certification data. She wants to create a spreadsheet showing trends on AT, volunteer hours, etc. as a measure of our success with relation to engaging membership.

F. Katy suggested asking various participants what they like about their project as a mini-interview when receiving their pin. Deb emphasized the importance of statistics and presenting them to the membership as a measure of accountability. Catherine and Elsa agree that members need to be made aware of how important it is that they share their story with the chapter. The board agreed that the use of the word “chat” instead of “interview” might be less daunting.

G. Sheryl felt that it would be helpful to form a committee to help carry out some of the goals listed since everyone already has a full plate with their current responsibilities.

H. Elsa asked each board member to make a list of the goals that they think should be accomplished in 2021 and send them to Carla by Monday, January 18th who will in turn compile them and have it ready for discussion at the January board meeting. She also asked each board member to review the Chapter Operating Handbook and note any changes that need to be made to their specific job description and have it ready to finalize by July.

**6. Membership Field Trips** – Carla did a good job facilitating field trips but was prevented from continuing due to COVID.

**ANNOUNCEMENTS:**

The 2021 Budget will be discussed at the next board meeting on January 21, 2021. Next chapter meeting will be held on January 25, 2021.

Motion to adjourn by Vern, seconded by Billy. Meeting adjourned at 12:05 p.m.