

November 28, 2022 Minutes for Meeting of Board of Hill Country Chapter, Texas Master Naturalists

Place: Riverside Nature Center & Zoom

Time: 2:30 p.m.

Present In Person: Carla Stang, Frank Garcia, Ron Scoggins, Jane Jamison, Alice King, Mark Hults, David Matthews

Present on Zoom: Diane Gierisch, Dot Maginot, Vern Crawford

Not Present: Tom Burke (with notice).

Carla called the meeting to order at 2:30.

Summary of Action Items:

1. Jane and David to finalize budget for New Class and send to the Board for review prior to December Board meeting for approval at December board meeting.
2. Diane to prepare a memo outlining her concerns about the administration of AT given the change in the CMOP to allow a limited amount of non-interactive training for AT credit.
3. Frank to present report on annual financial review at December Board meeting.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

On motion by Frank, seconded by Mark, the Board unanimously approved the minutes from the October 24, 2022 meeting.

APPROVAL OF TREASURER REPORTS:

Note to Chapter membership – financial reports available to active members in good standing on request. If you would like to see financial reports, please send an email to treasurer@hillcountrytmn.org.

Treasurer – Ron Scoggins

1. Ron reviewed the checking report for October, noting expenditures for storage, merchandise, textbooks for the new class, and seeds for the Kerrville Schreiner pollinator garden.
2. Ron noted income items that included a donation and a PGARP sign purchase.
3. Ron reviewed the year-to-date income and expense statement noting that expenses had exceeded income by about \$5,000 for the year.

On motion by Alice, seconded by Jane, the Board unanimously approved the Treasurer's report.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Carla reviewed the plan for conducting the votes at the Chapter meeting to: (i) approve the updated Bylaws and CMOP, and (ii) elect 2023 officers, noting in particular the setup of the voting process on Zoom.

REPORTS:

Vice President – Frank Garcia

1. Frank reported that he had speakers lined up for each of the January, February, and March Chapter meetings. Frank reported that there were 71 attendees at the October Chapter meeting, 37 via Zoom and 34 in person. There was a discussion of how to secure an AT credit number for the January presentation.

2. Carla reported that Deb Youngblood notified her that she could stay on to assist the incoming AT Director. Diane offered the same service until the role is filled for 2023 (new President solicits/selects new Directors).

Director of Volunteer Service Projects – Tom Burke

1. Carla reviewed Tom's report in Tom's absence; Tom reported no new projects had been opened in the prior month.

New Class Director – David Mathews

1. David reported that he, Jane, and Carla had met with Michelle Haggerty to review the proposed curriculum and that the meeting went well.
2. David reported on the New Class Committee's work and recommendation regarding the method of holding the Wednesday classes, noting that: (i) members of the New Class Committee had toured a Schreiner classroom and related facilities and found it accommodating; (ii) the class room seated 28 and that there was a refreshment space available; (iii) the cost to use the Schreiner room and facilities would be \$55 per class; and that (iv) he had attended a Zoom class held by the San Antonio Chapter.
3. David reported that after considering in-person vs. Zoom options for the Wednesday evening classroom days the New Class Committee had decided to recommend Zoom-only. David noted that Zoom only would avoid a cost of approximately \$1,600 and would be safer for the class (no night driving). David also noted that the Zoom classes could be more easily recorded and used for makeup classes. David noted that the San Antonio Chapter Zoom class had used break out rooms and that the chat feature had been constantly in use.

David formulated the following proposal for the Board's consideration:

That the 2023 class be held over approximately 11 weeks, on alternating Wednesdays and Fridays, with the Wednesday evening class being via live Zoom only from 6:00 p.m. – 9:00 p.m. and the Saturdays to be in-person class/field training from 9:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.

Alice made a motion to approve the proposal, seconded by Ron. Following discussion (described below) the Board unanimously voted to approve the proposal.

The discussion of the proposal included a discussion of Schreiner's participation in the program generally, the total number of training hours planned (24 classroom hours, 36 field hours, for a total of 60 hours), how the number of training hours compared to prior years, Michelle Haggerty's views (ok with Zoom only for a portion of the total hours), the schedule for mentors' initial meetings with mentees, the availability of classroom space at or near each of the field training locations, and the timing of VMS training (the week prior to the welcome reception).

There was a discussion of the budget for the 2023 Class. Jane shared a budget with the board. Since the budget had not been circulated in advance of the meeting Jane and David were asked to circulate the budget prior to the December Board meeting for final approval at the December Board meeting. Jane was also asked to make some final adjustments re: fees/contributions to the field venues (including those as class expenses rather than Chapter expenses).

Membership – Dot Maginot

1. Dot reported that slightly more than ½ of the 2022 Class had completed their initial certification. There was a discussion of the timing of the release of the application for the 2023 class and the need to capture the applicant's volunteer interests as part of the application so that they could be matched with a mentor.

Advanced Training – Diane Gierisch

1. Diane reported that the number of training opportunities was light, but that this was to be expected for this time of year. Diane noted that the number of training hours completed in the prior month was light but likely because Chapter members had already completed their certification requirements for the year. Carla made a note to include a reminder about completion of AT hours for annual certification as part of her comments at the Chapter meeting.
2. Diane reported her findings about changes to the “live interaction” requirement for AT credit, noting that the State’s wording gave the Chapters authority to approve AT without live interaction but indicated that the bulk of AT training should include the opportunity for live interaction (new CMOP, page 11 – 12). There was a discussion of how the Board could manage approvals of non-interactive training without creating undue burden on the AT Director and Committee. The general consensus was that the AT committee should develop a policy for approval by the 2023 Board. Carla asked Diane to prepare a memo outlining her concerns about the administration of AT given the change in the CMOP and send it to Michelle for guidance/clarification.

Communications – Mark Hulst

1. Mark reported that there had been 23 changes to the website, that social media visits were up slightly, that the print media was getting out, and that the communications team was running smoothly. There was a discussion of how to publicize the 20th anniversary of the Chapter to be celebrated at the Volunteer Appreciation Party.

OLD BUSINESS

The meeting discussed the plans for the Volunteer Appreciation Party, including the number of RSVP’s, the pre-event site visit planned for December 7, the details of the program, the raffle of the binoculars, and the silent auction.

NEW BUSINESS

1. Carla asked the Board members who were transitioning out of their role to begin preparing for a hand off to the incoming person.
2. The Board discussed the annual contribution/membership renewal with Riverside Nature Center. Ron proposed increasing the donation for 2022 to \$750 (up from \$500 in prior years). There was a discussion of the increase including the ways in which the Chapter in general benefitted from the RNC facility (as opposed to Cibolo, Fredericksburg which were generally used only for the New Class). On motion by Ron, seconded by Mark, the Board approved a \$750 contribution with one “no” vote and 1 abstention.
3. Frank reported that the annual financial review had been done and he would provide a report to the December Board meeting.
4. There was a discussion of how to get the word out to the Chapter about the structure of the 2023 class. Carla recommends a multi-pronged approach, including: announcement and description with members at an early 2023 chapter meeting, article for early 2023 Texas Star, Website “Class of 2023” page updated information, announcements/article for newspaper distribution describing the class structure (this is not any different than has been done in the past).

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 4:15 p.m.

Minutes taken by Alice King with modifications by Carla Stang.