

MARCH 27, 2023 MINUTES OF BOARD OF DIRECTORS FOR THE TEXAS MASTER NATURALIST HILL COUNTRY CHAPTER

Meeting Location: Riverside Nature Center

Time: 2:43 p.m.

Attending in Person: Jeff Schwarz, Kim Ort, Carla Stang, Ron Scoggins, Patti Guin, Dot Maginot, Mark Hults, Deb Youngblood, David Drake, Jane Jamison, David Matthews, and Vern Crawford

President Jeff Schwarz called the meeting to order at 2:43 p.m.

Approval of Minutes – Patti Guin

Secretary Patti Guin submitted the minutes from the February 27, 2023 Board meeting. On motion of Ron Scoggins, seconded by Jane Jamison, the minutes were unanimously approved.

REPORTS

Treasurer – Ron Scoggins

Ron Scoggins went over the general checking account register for the month of February, which revealed an ending balance of \$22,864.84.

Deb Youngblood asked Ron for an explanation for the listing “McCollum/Snyder Scholarship Fund” in the amount of \$1,289.52, since she was interested in our Chapter possibly donating college scholarships in the future to worthy candidates. It was explained that the fund was created in memory of two past deceased Master Naturalist class members and was established to provide tuition for a Texas Master Naturalist Hill Country Chapter new class applicant who might not be able to afford the cost of tuition. A brief discussion was held on the possibility of establishing a college scholarship fund, but no action was taken on the matter.

On motion of Mark Hults, seconded by Vern Crawford, the Treasurer’s report was unanimously approved.

Vice President – Kim Ort

Kim stated that she did not submit a written report but orally reported that she had secured two more Chapter meeting speakers and confirmed the following programs: June – Native Grasses; August – Horned Toads, and September – Exotics.

Immediate Past President – Carla Stang

Carla indicated she had nothing new to report.

Membership – Dot Maginot

Dot reported that the current number of active members in the membership directory was 207, and the number of members with VMS entries in 2023 was 170. She further reported 13 total year-to-date recertifications, and the new pin distribution total was 53.

Communications – Mark Hults

Mark reported on all Communication activities for the month of February, which included the following: *The Texas Star* newsletter was published on March 15, 2023; website statistics for the last 30 days – 1,472 sessions (an increase of 3%), 4,104 page views (an increase of 7%), and a 4% increase in the average duration of website sessions (3 min and 41 sec). He also stated that 21 changes were made to the website in February, and he provided a detailed log of the changes that were made. Mark announced that we currently have 290 subscribers to our YouTube channel, and that 20 people joined during the month of February. Mark further noted that we have seven new posts on Facebook and currently have 2.6K followers. Regarding print media, Mark indicated that *The Bandera Prophet*, an online publication, was added to our distribution list.

Ron Scoggins asked if the PGARP issues on the website had been resolved, and Mark indicated that tech support had not yet fixed the problem. Until the problem is fixed, Mark stated that the forms will come directly to him, and he will personally send them on.

Volunteer Service Projects – David Drake

David Drake reported that the following new projects had been approved since the last Board meeting: Bandera County River Authority & Groundwater District Rain Spotter Program and TPWD Bird City Texas Program. He further reported that there was one project lead change, and eight (8) one-time projects scheduled for March and April and five (5) recurring projects at Cibolo Nature Center have all been added to the calendar. Kim Ort suggested that in the future we should announce all new projects at the Chapter meeting. Carla Stang mentioned that another way to showcase a new project would be to write an article about the project and publish it on our website and in the newsletter.

Advanced Training – Deb Youngblood

Deb Youngblood reported that so far in 2023, 145 events have been logged totaling 282.5 hours. She indicated that last year at this time there were 194 events logged totaling 518 hours. She stated that one of the reasons for the decrease this year in the number of events and hours is that there were more webinars available last year than there has been this year. She disclosed that if this trend continued there would be fewer AT opportunities this year and she recommended that we encourage members to get their required/desired training as soon as it becomes available rather than wait for a possible training that may not reoccur. Deb also announced that Patricia Poore has agreed to be Assistant AT Director, and that one additional volunteer is needed.

New Class Committee – David Matthews and Jane Jamison

Jane Jamison briefly went over several highlighted matters on the New Class Committee timeline list. There was a short discussion regarding extending the application deadline to April 30, 2023. Mark Hults indicated that the application form was programmed to automatically disappear from the website on March 31. Since there were already 31 applicants that had applied to take the class, it was the consensus of the group that we not publish an extension of the application deadline.

Jane further announced that the Board and New Class Committee (and their spouses) were invited to participate in the two-day Bamberger Ranch field trip outing on the new class schedule to be held on September 30 and October 1. She stated that there was a \$33.00 per person fee for the Saturday tour, but there was no fee for the overnight and Sunday activities. She added that they do encourage donations, and any donation you make would be in addition to the \$33.00 tour fee.

Chapter State Representative – Vern Crawford

Vern stated he had nothing to report at this time.

NEW BUSINESS

1. President Schwarz reported that we might be able to secure a grant from Pedernales Electric Co-Op to help pay for new laptops and computer software, but that the deadline to apply for the grant was April 3, 2023. Mark Hults and Frank Garcia have agreed to complete the application and get it filed before the expiration of the deadline.
2. Regarding approval of projects and AT outside our Chapter boundaries, President Schwarz indicated he had spoken with Michelle Haggarty and was told that if a project meets our criteria, we could approve it. For approval of advanced training programs, the program must first be reviewed by AT Director Deb Youngblood, and then she will determine if it meets the criteria for our ecosystem. President Schwarz stated that he thought working on projects with other Chapters would be very beneficial to our Chapter.
3. Dot Maginot presented a typewritten snapshot of all 31 of the new class applicants. She mentioned that two or three of the applicants were questionable, as they either had not paid their application fee or background checks had not been completed. She indicated that was one of the reasons they wanted to extend the application deadline, which was discussed by the Board in connection with an earlier agenda item. After a brief discussion, Ron Scoggins made the motion that all 31 new class applicants be approved pending payment of fees and background checks. The motion was seconded by Vern Crawford, and unanimously approved. Mark Hults stated that he would place an announcement on the website for anyone who was interested in attending the 2023 new class training, to contact Dot Maginot at her email address.
4. Carla Stang announced that she was no longer able to help with the Bio Blitz Nature Challenge.

Following a review by President Schwarz of the upcoming Chapter meeting agenda, and there being no further business to discuss, on motion of Dot Maginot, seconded by Jane Jamison, the meeting was adjourned at 4:24 p.m.

Minutes taken and submitted by:

Patti Guin, Secretary