

**JANUARY 22, 2024 MINUTES OF BOARD OF DIRECTORS FOR THE  
TEXAS MASTER NATURALIST HILL COUNTRY CHAPTER**

**Meeting Location:** Riverside Nature Center

**Time:** 1:00 p.m.

**Attending in Person:** Jeff Schwarz, Carla Stang, Dot Maginot, Lou Hugman, Alice King, Patricia Poore, David Drake, Vern Crawford, Lisa Flanagan, Carra Milikien, Phil Roberson, and Mark Hults

**Absent:** none

**Also in Attendance:** Jane Jamison, Deb Youngblood

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*(Note: Alice King took the minutes for Secretary Lisa Flanagan at her request given that Lisa's hand is recovering from surgery.)*

President Jeff Schwarz called the January 22, 2024 Board meeting to order at 1:00 p.m.

**Minutes – Jeff Schwartz**

President Jeff Schwartz submitted former Secretary Patti Guin's minutes from the December 18, 2023 Board meeting. On motion of Carla Stang, seconded by Mark Hults, the Board Meeting minutes were unanimously approved.

**REPORTS**

**Treasurer – Dot Maginot**

Dot Maginot reviewed her written reports for December 2023. Among other things Dot noted the income and expense items related to the end-of-year volunteer appreciation party and the absence of any new expense items related to the 2023 class (which are fully accounted for at this point in prior months). The end-of-year bank balance was \$20,100 which was \$1,000 better than budgeted. Dot then reviewed the specific items summary and there was a brief discussion regarding PGARP expenses. Carla noted the existence of a scholarship fund of \$1,200 for tuition for the next new class. Dot noted that State income tax of approximately \$200 would be reflected in the next month's report. There being no further discussion pertaining to the financial report, Carla Stang made a motion that the Treasurer's report be approved, Lisa Flanagan seconded the motion, and it was unanimously approved.

**Vice President – Alice King**

Alice King reported that the joint RNC-NPSOT-TMN Spring plant sale was scheduled for April 20, 2024 and asked for volunteers. Carla Stang and Phil Roberson indicated that they were interested in serving on the Committee. Alice is to report the interest to Linda Fiore as the Plant Sale Committee chair. Alice is to serve as the "official liaison" but noted that volunteering on the committee is not limited to the official liaison.

Alice King reviewed some early-stage planning for a possible joint field trip with NPSOT Kerrville to Native American Seeds in Junction. The Board did not have concerns with this idea and Alice is to continue working with Kathy Loring of NPSOT Kerrville to try and make arrangements.

Alice King reviewed the speaker arrangements for February (Terry Hibbitts on photography) and March (Schreiner Professor Kim Arvidsson on the eclipse). Alice asked that the budget for 2024 include enough

to cover speaker stipends, gifts, and related expenses for the monthly Chapter meeting. Carra Milikien offered her cabin in Hunt as an overnight spot for speakers who travel to Kerrville to present to the Chapter. There was a discussion of reviving the tradition of Board members having dinner with the speakers for the Chapter meetings. Various members expressed interest and a commitment to attend dinners. Alice is to extend a dinner invitation to Terry Hibbits for February.

To conclude her report Alice tasked that the 2024 budget formation process include consideration of \$2000 for the end-of-year volunteer appreciation party.

Vern Crawford left the meeting at this point for a previously scheduled appointment.

### **Past President – Carla Stang**

Carla Stang reported that she would finalize the Chapter Operating Handbook (the “COH”) and distribute it to the Board for review and e-approval and would then distribute the draft to the Chapter for approval at the February meeting (in accordance with Bylaws notice requirements). Carla will distribute to the Board a report that summarizes the changes from the prior version of the COH and identifies those parts of the proposed COH that are deviations from the State’s templated version. Carla noted that the deviations from the State version are permitted deviations. Carla then presented an optional clause that the Board could adopt to establish a new committee to manage grants and certain other funding. The Board discussed the pro’s and con’s of adopting the clause. The discussion touched on the need for external funding and the logistics of how external funding would be sought and managed. The Board decided to table consideration of the optional clause and consider it further as part of the Board retreat. The Board decided that project leads should keep the Board approved of fundraising efforts irrespective of whether the optional clause was adopted; Carla noted that the COH would cover this.

### **New Class Committee – Carra Milikien**

New Class Director Carra Milikien reported on the introductory meetings of the new class committee, noting that the committee was in the brainstorming phases and would move into decisions and details at subsequent meetings. Carra noted that there are lots of good ideas being floated at the meetings. Carra is asking the committee to meet every two weeks since they are starting their meetings a little later than usual. There was a discussion of the use of virtual meetings (Zoom) for the classroom part of the training. Carra noted that the framework for thinking about this included whether a given presentation would be stronger on Zoom or in person. Carra also affirmed that the committee was actively considering ways to ensure that the members of the new class have ample opportunities to form relationships with each other and get plugged into the wider Chapter. The discussion also touched on the use of virtual meetings as a way to enable participation by individuals who have work, family, or other commitments that would make 100% in-person attendance infeasible for them. There was a frank discussion of whether individuals unable to attend classes in-person 100% of the time would then have time to do meaningful volunteer hours on completion of the training. Various points were made to illustrate that an individual’s need for some remote training options would not be an indicia of their success as a volunteer.

### **Membership – Phil Roberson**

New Membership Director Phil Roberson presented the Membership report. Phil noted that re-certifications were up by 1 over the prior year, that there were 14 new attritions (14 individuals reporting no hours reported for 2023), and that 22 members of the 2023 class have certified with several more are expected to certify in February. Phil reported that the list of persons interested in a 2024 class had grown to 71 individuals. Patricia Poore proposed organizing carpools to facilitate training for members who might not otherwise attend in-person events. There was a discussion of the ways in which carpooling could be facilitated using information available to the Board in VMS or other places without compromising member privacy. There was a general consensus that this should be further pursued.

### **Communications – Mark Hults**

Mark Hults presented the Communications report noting that activities covered by his report had rebounded to normal levels after the typical end-of-year slowdown. Mark then led a discussion around the planned Speakers Bureau, reporting that almost all presenters had consented to the use of their recorded presentations as part of the Speakers Bureau. In response to various questions Mark provided details on how the Speakers Bureau would operate. Given that the new members of the current Board had not been part of prior discussions Mark will re-present information regarding the Speakers Bureau to the Board ahead of asking for formal Board approval to launch. Mark noted Carla Stang's role on his team as One Drive Administrator. Mark also noted the popularity of the Chapter's social media channels.

### **Volunteer Service Projects – David Drake**

David reported that there had been no changes to the approved project list since the prior month (no new projects or terminated projects). David then led a discussion around including all counties in the Chapter's eco-region as eligible service areas for the Chapter. David proposed increasing the service area to a total of 45 counties to include the entire eco-region. There was a discussion of the proposal, including the fact that the COH requires the Project Director to approve new projects as they are proposed. On motion by Alice King, seconded by Patricia Poore, the Board unanimously approved expanding the Chapter's service area to include all 45 counties that are part of the Hill Country eco-region.

### **Advanced Training – Patricia Poore**

New AT Director Patricia Poore presented the AT report noting that the AT team was aiming for a minimum of 40 approved events per month. Patricia shared a summary of upcoming events.

### **Chapter State Representative – Vern Crawford**

No report was submitted.

### **New Business**

### **2024 Officers, Directors, and Committee/Special Positions**

Jeff Schwarz reported on Committee assignments and roles. Board members offered a few updates for his report. Jeff shared a slide showing the approximate home location of the Board members. There was a brief discussion of the best place to hold Board meetings and whether they should be held on the same day as the Chapter meeting. Deb Youngblood described her conversations with other Chapters Board representatives at the State convention about how they schedule Board and Chapter meetings.

## **Chapter Facts**

Jeff shared several slides summarizing Chapter facts, including:

TMNs as a percentage of County population for each County in the Hill Country Chapter  
This catalyzed a discussion of whether the larger counties currently part of the Hill Country Chapter might be separate chapters at some point in the future

Drive times

Projects

Volunteer Work Hours and AT Hours

This catalyzed a discussion of the 2016 VMS implementation resulting in a drop in recorded volunteer hours

Member Hours by individuals (no-name basis)

Top Volunteers

Active Member distribution by age and gender

Active/Inactive members

The Board took a break and on returning from the break there was a motion to adjourn the meeting by Lisa Flanagan, seconded by Carra Milikien. The Board voted unanimously in favor of adjournment at approximately 3:15.