

RGV Chapter Texas Master Naturalist
2024 March Board Meeting
March 5, 2024

Attendance:

Officers

Robin Gelston - President
Dan Martin – 2 VP
Evelyn Alpert – Secretary
Emma Gonzalez – 1 VP

Directors

Joni Gillis - Membership
Barbara Peet - New Training
Robert Gaitan - Past President
David Batot- Volunteer Service Projects
Marilyn Lorenz - outreach
Tony Reisinger- Advisor

At large

Joyce Halpin- Winter Texan

Others

Robert Cepeda, New Class representative
Volker Imschweiler

Agenda

1. Call to order –The meeting was called to order at 5:35pm by Robin Gelston
2. Approval of Prior Board Meetings Minutes – January and February minutes were approved, as moved by David Batot and seconded by Marilyn Lorenz
3. Reports

Treasurer – Betsy was not present at the meeting; however she emailed the financial statements for February 2024. There were no questions or concerns about the financial statements.

Audit

Emma and Robin completed the audit and noted the following:

- The budget must be prepared by the start of the year.
- Everyone should be aware that TMN is a tax exempt entity and they should not pay or expense them without board approval.
- Checks should be cashed within 3 to 5 months.
- Checks need to be legible.
- Only active members can be reimbursed.

It was also noted that Walmart will provide you with a card showing the tax exempt status, or bring the organizational form with you to Walmart/ vendor

The question was raised whether there was a limit to what a member can spend without board approval; Robin will review.

Only 5 out of 20 attending members who attended the state meeting have filed for their reimbursement.

Membership – Joni Gillis reported 152 active members, of whom 79 have paid and 73 still owe dues. With the inclusion of honorary members and the trainees, the total number is 187. There are now 4 people with 100 volunteer hours, 1 member with 250 hours, 3 with 1000 hours, and 2 members being honored at the March meeting, Jimmy Paz with 4000 hours and Carolyn Cardile with 5000 hours.

It was also noted that volunteer time must be logged within 45 days of performance, or the system will not allow you to enter it and the time will be lost. Approval has been a bit slow, but you will not lose the hours. Typically, hours are approved once or twice a month depending on the person approving the hours.

Communication/Outreach –

Eryn/Mara were not present at the meeting. The website update is proceeding; some updates are currently at the bottom of the first page or under the blog (handbook, bylaws, management list) but eventually the whole website will be reorganized to be easier to navigate and find things.

Marilyn Lorenz - Reported that the Expo was well attended. Future events are planned for Earth Day April 22, and that an event will be held on April 13 the Harlingen Public Library. More information will be available at the March meeting. She also noted a SPI Beach cleanup which is a regular event sponsored monthly.

Diane Hall noted the Chachalaca Newsletter was published on March 3. She would really like to jazz up the newsletter but does not have the software necessary to do so. Tony suggested buying the software she needs and getting her the training. It was suggested to first check with the state to see if there is a statewide program available for use.

New Class Director – Barbara Peet

Barbara reported that a few of the trainees were not entering their hours in VMS but engaging mentors and working with the students will help. The 45-day limit was causing some issues with former trainees reporting their hours are not being approved. The new class has been warned we all have a 45-day deadline to record our hours.

We are offering a 12th class, as usual, to ensure all trainees are able to complete their class time hours. Class presentations are being offered in a hybrid fashion. As always, we have some trainees that like the in-person option while working parents like the remote option. Upcoming field trips include Sal de Rey, Edinburg Scenic Wetlands, Cactus Creek Ranch and Palo Alto Battlefield. She also noted that the goal is to graduate the whole class, as always.

Advance Training

TMN Tuesday is offering a new raptor survey, a citizen science project to see how raptor behavior is changing with urbanization.

Volunteer Service Project – Robin reported that 11 members had signed up for the Bat project, but that we are still awaiting more information from the state. David is also looking into some additional projects. Robin reported that members might be able to do some ocelet work reviewing trap camera footage.

March Volunteer Fair – We have 14 partner confirmations, and might still get a few more. Jimmy and Carolyn will be honored there as well.

Old/Pending Business

None

New Business

Robin advised that there are 2 new projects for consideration:

The first one is a partnership with UT Health for TMN to host nature walks as part of the Tu Salud Si Cuenta programming funded by the TPWD CO-OP grant. TMN members would lead nature walks of approximately 45 minutes for low income children/families to encourage participation in outdoor activities. David moved for the board to approve the project, Marilyn seconded, and the motion was approved.

The second project is a 5 year project for the Rio Grande Valley Chapter to partner with Texas A&M, TWRI, UTRGV, Port Isabel, LV, and ACAS. The project is a \$6 million grant with \$60 K being offered to the RGVCTMN. The project includes many types of activities such as planting, habitat restoration, or any other ideas we might come up with. We can create our own projects or assist the partners with theirs. Dan made the motion to approve and Joni seconded. The motion passed.

Announcements – none

Comments/Presentations none

Adjournment The meeting was adjourned at 6:52 PM.