

**RGV Chapter Texas Master Naturalist  
2024 May Board Meeting  
May 7, 2024**

**Attendance:**

**Officers**

Robin Gelston - President  
Dan Martin – Second VP  
Evelyn Alpert - Secretary  
Emma Gonzalez – First VP  
Betsy Hosick - Treasurer

**Directors**

Joni Gillis - Membership  
David Batot - Volunteer Service Projects  
Barbara Peet - New Training Class  
Mara Lee Moats - Communication  
Eryn Wingert - Communication  
Teresa Du Bois - AT  
Robert Gaitan - Past President

**At large**

Joyce Baer Halpern - Winter Texan  
Pam Bradley- Coastal  
Thomas Butcher – Brownsville  
Robert Cepeda - New Class representative  
Tony Reisenger – Advisor  
Ernesto Garcia Ortega - Advisor

**Others**

Barb Peterson  
Susan Upton  
Chery Brummet  
David Gordon  
Alicia Cavazos  
Diane Cepeda  
Stephanie Mendoza

**Agenda**

1. Call to order –The meeting was called to order at 5:36pm by Robin Gelston
2. Approval of Prior Board Meetings Minutes – April minutes were approved, as moved by David Batot and seconded by Emma Gonzales
3. Reports
  - Treasurer** – Betsy reported that as of Apr 30 we had approximately \$23,794.95 in our savings account and approximately \$10,697.36 in our checking. Betsy requested that anyone with ideas on how to use our savings to please pass their thoughts to her. She is also reconciling the class expenses, as it appears we are bringing in more than we are expensing. (Barbara Peet advised she still has some new class expenses to file). Betsy will also be reconciling our inventory within the next month.
  - Membership** – Joni Gillis advised that the email she sent to leadership requesting authority to order a supply of recert and other pins was approved, and she has forwarded the invoice to Betsy to pay so the pins can be ordered. Joni also reported a total of 185 members, 160 active

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members, with 22 in training with only 1 unpaid. She noted the following milestones to be celebrated at the next meeting:

100 hours – Robert Gardner  
250 hours- Bobbie Brown  
1000 hours – Paul Sorenson  
2500 hours – Marilyn Lorenz

It was also noted that the speaker for the next meeting will be John Yoakum from Estero Llano Grande State Park about Butterflies of the RGV instead of Justin who has been called away for work.

**Communication/Outreach** – Mara Lee and Eryn have been tasked with updating the website. Mara thanked everyone for their compliments on the work being done on the site. She called out Chet, Eryn and Rick for their work to make the site clear, functional and informative. Eryn noted that Chet is doing a lot of the nitty gritty work in the background, including taking down the site, doing clean up, and bringing it back up. Rick is reviewing what changes were part of the software updates and Eryn is doing another website audit update. Eventually they plan to do some design refresh but for right now are focused on clean up.

If anyone has ideas for the website, they should communicate them to Mara.

Betsy thanked Robert for setting up some autopayments that are required on a periodic basis for the software. This way we stay up to date.

**Outreach** – Marilyn Lorenz

Marilyn was not at the meeting, but Robin advised there was not a lot of outreach activities for May, beyond the Pollinator group planting on the island. There has been a suggestion to order some new tablecloths for use at outreach events. Also noted was the excellent turnout during April at the Harlingen Public Library event, Los Fresno's Earth Day event and at the STEC Cinco de Mayo event.

**New Class Director** – Barbara Peet

Barbara reported that 27 finished the class, and 23 graduates and their families attended the graduation at STEC. She also reported that 7 grads have obtained their 1<sup>st</sup> year certification and 3 graduated have attained 1<sup>st</sup> year certification and 100 volunteer hours.

Alicia Cavazos noted that she preferred the pre-Covid method of celebrating graduation with both the class and existing membership as it provided a means of the old and new members getting to know one another. This was discussed and there was agreement that it would be good to go back to the old way instead of just having the graduating class present. Possible venues would be the Harlingen Methodist Church, as STEC was too small. This is something worth spending the saving on.

**Advance Training** – Teresa Du Bois

Teresa was present but unable to connect to give her report. Robin reported that TMN Tuesday is next week. Also, most opportunities are being announced on the FB page, by Teresa.

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**Volunteer Service Project – David Batot**

David reported that they have 2 different bat monitors (one of \$750 value and one of \$75 value) and that only the more expensive one is really useful. It is being deployed at Laguna Atascosa via Cactus Creek Ranch. Tony moved that we purchase a second one of the \$750 ones so we can continue monitoring in years to come. Dan seconded the motion and the motion passed.

- 1) Coop grant is going slowly but is going.
- 2) Palo Alto grant will only be known in August.
- 3) The grant for the Gulf Coast disadvantaged community health and resilience structure- won't know anything until November.

**Old/Pending Business**

Robin asked board members to send photos of themselves to her, and to turn in their conflict-of-interest forms to her as well. [Note from secretary....I only have Tony R, Evelyn, Pamela Bradley, Robin, Betsy, Diane Hall, Javier de Leon, Thomas Butcher, Emma Gonzales, Joni Gillis, and Dan Martin]. Robin will check on which photos that are necessary to complete the leadership list.

**New Business**

1. Robin advised that sponsorships are available at different levels for the annual meeting this year in San Marcos. Discussion ensued about what level of sponsorship we should pursue and how we want to stipend attendees, and Betsy suggested we think about what return we are expecting for whatever we spend. It was decided to table the discussion/action item until next month.
2. The tablecloth recommendation was raised, and it was suggested we buy 2 new ones for the pollinator project work and the new class meetings. Barbara Peet advised that she did not really need one for the class, but the meeting attendees agreed that 2 would be ok. Joni motioned to approve the purchase and Tony seconded it, and the motion passed.
3. Robin raised the issue of volunteer hours as board members on other organization boards, that she detailed in her email to the whole chapter of last week. She noted that board work for other organizations does not count for our volunteer hours unless you are specifically requested to represent TMN on that board. She noted that this is not a change, that this has always been the case. A lengthy discussion ensued, and it was finally decided to request clarification from the State, and Mary Pearl.
4. The next issue raised was the book club. It was noted that in order for AT hours to be earned from book club activity, the club must be a chapter sponsored club. In mid-April Robert Gaitan requested from the existing book club members that the name of his book club be changed and his desire for a broader audience. Again, a lengthy discussion ensued, during

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which time it seemed that the original book club may not have been adopted by the board as a chapter sponsored club, however, the board and members assumed it was. There was no plan to go back and request that AT hours earned at the book club be removed. It was simply a clarification that they could no longer be so earned unless the club became a chapter sponsored book club. Robert noted that he did not want to be chapter sponsored book club, as he wanted to pursue some readings that did not fit the state requirements.

The decision was made that Robert would continue with his book club, Texas Nature Book Club and that the RGV Nature book club would be reopened, Robin noted that someone would need to manage this RGV club and ensure adherence to TMN rules. Emma motioned that the RGV Nature Book club be a chapter sponsored club, and Barbara seconded the motion. The motion passed.

5. Robert questioned why the Native Plant Society of Texas is not a sponsored partner since is already a partner of TMN state. Again, a long discussion ensued, but eventually Susan Upton suggested getting clarification from the State. The matter was tabled until next month.

**Announcements** – none

**Comments/Presentations** none

**Adjournment**

The meeting was adjourned at 7:40 PM

Respectfully submitted by:

Evelyn Alpert  
Secretary  
Rio Grande Valley Chapter of Texas Master Naturalist