

RGV Chapter Texas Master Naturalist
2024 December Board Meeting
Dec 3, 2024

Attendance:

Officers

Robin Gelston - President
Betsy Hosick – Treasurer
Evelyn Alpert – Secretary
Rob Gardner- 2025 First VP
TC Chad Wilmoth – Second VP

Directors and Committees

Joni Gillis - Membership
Teresa Du Bois - AT
David Batot - Volunteer Service Projects
Mara Lee Moats - Communication
Amy Daley - Education
Barb Peterson – Education
Robert Cepeda- 2024 New Class Representative

At large

Joyce Baer Halpern - Winter Texan
Jose Palmos – Central Cameron County Area
Mary Grizzard – Coastal Area

Others

Teresa de Salvo
Daina Cepeda

Agenda

1. Call to order –The meeting was called to order at 5:38pm by Robin Gelston
2. Approval of Prior Board Meetings Minutes – David Batot moved that the November minutes be approved, and Amy Daley seconded. Minutes were approved.
3. Robin introduced some of the newly elected board members, specifically TC Wilmoth as 2nd vice president, Rob Gardner as 1st vice president and Mary Grizzard as an at large representative. She also noted that the bylaws and chapter handbook are now online under the resources heading.

3. Reports

Treasurer – Betsy noted balance at end of November was \$12,167.90 of which \$2,708.10 was from the new class and savings was \$23,902.96. Betsy noted that Jody has completed all the months reports so those are all caught up. Joni suggested that the 2025 budget be reviewed in the coming chapter meeting. Betsy raised the issue of the scholarship/reimbursement checks (for leading the field trips to the different parks). There were 8 volunteers, who were told they could receive reimbursement of \$150 of their class costs if they led the walks. There were several glitches in the execution of the grant. Sometimes no one showed up for a walk for which

the volunteer had prepared, and some of the volunteers only completed some of the walks. There are remaining grant funds. One person was reimbursed \$150, there is one person who completed 5 walks, one that completed 4, 3 that completed 3, and 1 that completed 1. Betsy said we could either lower the walk threshold to reimburse or extend the amount of time they have to complete their walks or ask UT Health to donate the funds or to be refunded the amount. The final recommendation was to prorate the amount and to go back to UT Health and ask them to donate the balance. Teresa moved to approve this approach, and David seconded. The motion passed.

Membership – Joni advised there are 185 members, 150 active members, 4 TMN associates 30 in training (of which 20 are from the new class, and 10 from the old), and 1 advisor/associate member. The 2nd advisor needs to be added to VMS. Milestones are 250 hours Teresa de Salvo, 500 hours Mary Grizzard, and 4000 hours Chuck Cornell. Joni noted that she has gotten through all but about 182 entries in VMS that needed approval and hopes to have that done by the end of the week; she believes we need 4 people to do the approvals. Joni noted that she had been asked to test and train on the new VMS and she will keep us advised. She also reminded everyone of the need to stop using acronyms in VMS in order to meet the audit requirements. She will also be sending out descriptions of the volunteer services.

Communication – Mara Lee reported that she will begin working on our Instagram page in the coming year.

New Class Training – Amy reported that the application process is now going well, they have 20 paid new class members, 4 more who've applied but not paid, and have space available for 6 more. One applicant has applied for a scholarship, and Amy asked how the scholarships were awarded as there are only 3. The board advised that the new class directors decide who gets the scholarships. Teresa de Salvo is handling the mentors and Terrilyn Alaniz, Alicia Cavazos, Susan Upton and Chad have all agreed to mentor. Also, the team is looking for contacts for good field trips and ideas.

Advance Training – Teresa Du Bois noted that everything with AT is going well, and that she will be adding some things to Facebook shortly.

Outreach – Marilyn was not present, but Robin noted that volunteers were needed for the STEC Christmas event and for the Resaca de la Palma Sweet 16 celebration. Also the Chachalaca should be posted in the next day or two.

Volunteer Service Project – David noted that he and Joni attended the Coastal Marine event on Nov. and that the meeting was not what they had expected. For the bat project he would like to buy the PRO version of the deciphering software which would be \$399 for 2 years 2024 and 2025 data. Robin indicated that David could spend the money if it meets the requirements of the project.

Old/Pending Business -Robin is still working on the Tri fold.

New Business

Robert Cepeda who was this year's 2024 class president raised the discussion of the junior master naturalist program. He would like our chapter to recognize the chapter at Los Fresnos Villareal Elementary School. He noted that the State does not have a formal junior program and

TPWD asks them to submit their training programs. The advisors to the existing program at the school are all teachers and TMN members from our chapter. They meet every other week and encourage family members to attend trips. He wants our chapter to formally recognize them as an official junior partner. Betsy moved to approve this recognition and Joni seconded it. Robert noted there is no formal curriculum but that the lessons coincide with what they are doing in class and that they are looking to formalize the curriculum this year. The motion passed.

Robin advised that 2025 board meetings and chapter meetings will remain on the same schedule as 2024. Meetings at STEC will be in March, April, September and December, the rest at the Harlingen Library.

The board meeting ended at 6:43PM.

RGV Chapter Texas Master Naturalist
2025 Planning meeting
Dec 3, 2024

Attendance:

Officers

Robin Gelston - President
Betsy Hosick – Treasurer
Evelyn Alpert – Secretary
Rob Gardner- 2025 First VP
TC Chad Wilmoth – 2025 Second VP

Directors and Committees

Joni Gillis - Membership
Teresa Du Bois - AT
David Batot - Volunteer Service Projects
Mara Lee Moats - Communication
Amy Daley - Education
Barb Peterson – Education
Robert Cepeda- 2024 New Class Representative

At large

Joyce Baer Halpern - Winter Texan
Jose Palmos – 2024 Central Cameron County area
Mary Grizzard – Coastal Area

Others

Teresa de Salvo
Daina Cepeda

Robin read some parts of the bylaws and chapter handbook and requested the conflict-of-interest forms from new board members.

She noted that she is preparing a handbook with a calendar of events, passwords, accounts, code of ethics, forms, lists of grants, and some letters of support to assist anyone who might take on the president position.

Board/Chapter Meetings

She advised that the hybrid (online and in person) meetings will continue 5:30 – 7:30 for board meeting and Chapter meeting will be 6 to 8pm. It was recommended that we change the format of the meeting to see if we could put the speakers before the rest so that attendees are not distracted. Robin said she would consult with Tamie as some speakers can't get there early enough for that.

Membership /Communications

There was some discussion around how to get members more involved including carpooling, raffles, and personally reaching out to other members. The communications are important and even though some are repeated (Sea turtle, Birding Center) there is no way for Robin to know if members are receiving them directly from the partner, so she forwards all to be safe. Rob Garnder noted that he felt there was

not enough connection between the new class members and the other chapter members and Amy and Barb said they will work to remedy that split.

New Class

The new class is starting on Wed the 15th of Jan. They still have 6 spaces available, and they have posted on Face book. Barb had given out a schedule of the speakers for the class, trying to match the speakers with the subjects they will be doing in training. She feels the mentor program should be the key to building community in the chapter, and the mentor should be taking the lead.

It was noted that we are not getting feedback from our partners. Robin noted that we still need a historian and archivist. She also requested member photos from events as she is preparing a scrapbook.

Outreach

Robin has a list of all the outreach done in 2024 and requested review to see nothing was missing. Also a request was made for more information on what all the pollinator group was doing.

Advance Training

For AT, it was noted that TMNTuesday, STEC series and Chapter meetings are all useful AT. Teresa puts the information online.

Volunteer Service Projects

Volunteer service projects – older projects have been deactivated and need to be updated on the website. They can be reactivated if leadership can be found. It was noted that we need to pick projects that interest our members and are sustainable.

Audit

The yearly audit is coming up, typically in February conducted by the First VP.

Merchandise

Betsy noted that she has a lot of merchandise that could be discounted and sold. There were no fundraisers in 2024, and it was suggested that we need to in 2025 as dues do not cover our expenses. The question was how often to do them. Suggested fundraisers were silent auction, Native plant sale?

Field Trips /Workdays

Another suggestion was field trips for the chapter. Two were done in 2024, and maybe we will try for 4 in 2025. Robin suggested one in each county, possibly one to Port Mansfield, East Foundation and Coastal, Estero llano Grande. Another suggestion was a shrimp trawler combined with a workday such as beach cleanup and reforestation. Suggestions can be submitted to Robin and the chapter will consider them.

The meeting ended at 8:33 PM
Respectfully submitted,
Evelyn Alpert