

TMN – COT

Board of Directors Meeting Wednesday, April, 2011 The AgriLife Building - Angleton, Texas

Attendees: Ed Barrios, Barbara Burkhardt, Marty Cornell, Justina Dent, Jerry Eppner, Sandy Henderson, Mary Holler, Mary Helen Israel, Ruby Lewis, Neal McLain, Candace Novak. Corrie Bowen participated at the end of the meeting. Guests: Layna Lewis and Tom West, Brazoria County Library.

Start Time: 10:00

After the call to order by President Barbara Burkhardt, guests Tom West and Layna Lewis, of the **Brazoria County Library**, were invited to present their proposal to expand the Angleton library's Nature Night program to include the county's other libraries. One target audience would be home school programs. This expansion would require more naturalists to present topics in their areas of expertise, with TMN-COT members playing a key role. The sessions are designed to last one hour, typically between 6:30 and 7:30 pm, with about 45 minutes of lecture/presentation and 15 minutes of follow up discussion.

Layna reviewed her pilot program, which has drawn 92 adults and 117 children in the first three events of 2011. In January, Sheryl Rogers brought live owls and did a presentation on wildlife rehab. and education. In February, Laura and Dave Brandes did an interactive bat program. In March, Friends of Brazoria Refuges sponsored a raptor program given by Steve Hoddy of EarthQuest® who talked about the habitats of his Harris Hawk, Eurasian Eagle owl, Peregrine falcon, and Andean condor. Layna noted that a dozen boy scouts from one troop have been consistent attendees.

April 16th will feature Sea Center Texas; May 23rd highlights the Sea Shell Searchers of Brazoria County; on August 29th, COT's Barbara Burkhardt and the Gulf Coast Bird Observatory will talk about Hummingbirds, and on September 26 TMN Ed Barrios will discuss insects.

Layna and Tom asked for the board's advice on possible topics and speakers and how many times to repeat the talk at the various county libraries. **Ruby Lewis accepted the role of coordinator for our chapter and will get back to Tom West with our suggestions.** It was agreed that, if we expand our participation, we will need a partnership agreement with the Brazoria County Library System. **Neal McLain volunteered to work with Tom to develop this agreement.**

Action items (highlighted sections are still works-in-progress)

Mary Helen Israel included a statement in our March newsletter reminding members of our policy on granting AT for subjects previously taken (a two-year hiatus is required.).

Barbara Burkhardt and Ed Barrios met with James Glover and Richard Hurd and came to an understanding of roles and responsibilities of our chapter and the Brazoria County Parks Department for this year's summer camp at Camp Mohawk.

At the time of this meeting, Sandy Henderson had not found an acceptable 12'X12' pop-up shelter, but she has since purchased this tent. It will be passed to Ruby Luis for her use in her outreach work.

Ruby Lewis reported on her scouting of Angleton's "Market Days", a new bi-annual event held at the county fairgrounds. She observed that this venue is mostly the selling of jewelry and crafts and determined that it is not an appropriate forum to promote Master Naturalists.

Candace Novak was not ready to provide a list of extra-general meeting AT opportunities; this task will be done at a future board meeting.

Neal McLain will work on a suggested revised format for partnership agreements, but due to the press of preparations for Migration Celebration, will present his ideas at a future board meeting.

Barbara Burkhardt continues to play "tag" with Cheryl Rogers trying to get clarification on Cheryl's request for COT help in building a raptor flight cage.

The Minutes from the March Board meeting as corrected from e-mail comments were approved (moved by Neal McLain, seconded by Ed Barrios, approved by all).

Treasurer's Report:

Sandy Henderson reported the following summary of our finances:

CRADLE OF TEXAS 2011 INCOME AND EXPENSE BUDGET

INTERN CLASS REVENUE/EXPENSES	2010 Actual	2011 Budget	2011 Actual
Revenue			
Class fee	450.00	750.00	500.00
Intern manual payment	270.00	450.00	240.00
Expenses			
Intern Manual purchases	608.82	700.00	0.00
Social expenses, name tags, postage, shirts	462.56	500.00	131.44
Ad for TMN Training	0.00	300.00	325.50
Net Gain (Loss)			\$283.06
NON-CLASS REVENUE/EXPENSES	2010 Actual	2011 Budget	2011 Actual
Revenue			
2011 dues paid in 2011	0.00	100.00	130.00
2012 dues paid in 2011	0.00	400.00	0.00
Interest Income	32.50	35.00	4.77
Misc. Income	50.00	0.00	824.00
Total income			958.77
Expenses			
Administrative Expenses	89.93	100.00	257.47
Drinks and supplies for social events	225.13	200.00	0.00
Officer badges	42.00	42.00	23.80
TMN Meeting Registration	0.00	90.00	0.00
Misc. Expenses	92.00	100.00	\$80.00
Total Expenses			361.27
Chapter Profit / (Loss)			880.56
Carry over from 2010			5757.12
TMN-COT Account Balance			6637.68

Program Chair

Mary Holler stated that her meeting with ConocoPhillips to discuss their environmental program with the Sweeny ISD was canceled. No attempt was made by ConocoPhillips to reschedule. This program appears to be dead unless interest is shown by these parties.

This weekend, Mary will attend a USFWS session in Austin teaching how to facilitate their "Project Wild" program. This program includes new sections designed for kindergarten-age children.

Mary reported that our general meeting lectures are set through June (see our chapter calendar.) In July, she would like to schedule the Galveston TMN chapter to present their programs on "10ers" and Junior Master Naturalists. She is also pursuing the Lookingbills to discuss their experience and techniques in banding birds.

Barbara reported that Kirk Feurebacher's training class talk on prairies, which included a walk through the Nash Prairie, was exceptional, approaching the subject by discussing how to manage this natural resource. It was unfortunate that this session was poorly attended, with only four interns and four COT members participating. Barbara proposes a repeat early next year, possibly in January or February to avoid conflict with the many activities around DEEP and Migration Celebration.

Training and Intern Update

Training chair Laura Brandes, unable to attend because of her recovery from recent surgery, e-mailed a request by intern John Minkert to extend his training period beyond the specified 15 month requirement. It was noted that John is a volunteer at Sea Center. Marty Cornell moved, and Jerry Eppner seconded a motion to accept his request. The motion carried unanimously by the board.

Barbara Burkhardt read Laura's e-mail report on training, which begged the question of the format of future training sessions. Jerry Eppner commented that the current procedure requires lots of record keeping, but has lots of pluses including flexibility to timing by intern participants. Others noted that the current system requires lots of work for the teachers who often are rewarded with poor attendance; an audience of two to four interns is increasingly typical. Ed Barrios repeated his conversation with Laura who says that the records are now much easier to maintain. President Barbara Burkhardt observed that it is her task to identify a training chair by September.

Outreach Chair

Ruby Lewis noted that COT needs to identify members who will staff our booth at the upcoming Migration Celebration; she will pass out a sign-up sheet at next week's general meeting.

Summer Library Program:

At the next general meeting, Ruby will also ask for volunteers to help in June's programs at Brazoria County libraries.

River Trail Program,

Neal McLain noted that the Brazoria County Parks Department (BCPD) is developing a river trail program for canoeing and kayaking, with one section having a launch point at the FM1462 bridge over the Brazos River and continuing downstream to Freeport with three intermediate stops. The BCPD would like our help in developing this "trail", as defined in a VPAR submitted by Neal. Ed Barrios move and Sandy Henderson seconded a motion to approve this VPAR; the motion passed unanimously.

Migration Celebration:

Ed Barrios noted that our biggest concern over the upcoming Migration Celebration was the possibility that the US Congress would not approve a budget, thus shutting down "nonessential" government operations, e.g. including National Wildlife Refuges. This potential would not affect the April 15th kickoff events at RiverPlace in Freeport. Our volunteer base this year is in good shape, only requiring last minute fine tuning.

Sea Turtle Patrol

Jennifer Sanchez put in a request for help in the San Bernard NWR's sea turtle patrols, with training occurring the week after migration celebration, 6:00 pm on April 21st.

September Tenth Year Celebration:

Ed Barrios stated that his planning activities will start after this year's Migration Celebration. He said that both Michel Haggerty and Sonny Arnold are planning to participate. Justina Dent recommended that we print special 10-year T-shirts.

May Board Meeting

Since at least five board members will be traveling during the first couple weeks of May, the May board meeting is canceled. Ed Barrios moved and Sandy Henderson seconded a motion to re-establish future board meetings from 3:00 to 5:00 pm on the first Wednesday of each month. This motion was unanimously approved.

Extension Office Fees and Services.

Corrie Bowen stepped into our meeting to review the initiatives by Texas A&M - AgriLife to minimize the impact of budget cuts imposed by our state legislature. He said that the "last word" on cost recovery was that Texas Master Naturalists were essentially exempt, but he just got a phone call says the issue is still under development.

For background, he said that state expenditures to ag-extension activities are matched under the US Congress Smith-Lever Act. Thus the proposed \$1.2 million state cut would have a total impact of negative \$2.4 million. Recent budget cuts have already reduced AgriLife employment by 90 people; the proposed further cuts would necessitate another 120 to 170 workforce reduction.

For our COT chapter Corrie agrees that we operate effectively without much interaction by Angleton AgriLife personnel. He mentioned that he liked what he saw during his recent visit to one of the DEEP sessions at the Brazoria NWR (manned primarily by TMN-COT members).

The target goal is for AgriLife to find a way to get \$5 million in cost recovery over the next two years; hence their proposal to impose a fee for participants in activities run by AgriLife sponsored groups. For COT, it appears that our only such activity is our intern training classes.

Review Action Items

The action items, all highlighted in yellow in the above text, were reviewed.

The meeting was adjourned at 12:01

Marty Cornell

Secretary,
Texas Master Naturalist Cradle of Texas Chapter

Note: There will be no meeting of the COT Board in May, 2011
