

Dallas County Master Gardener Association

Board Meeting Minutes

Date: May 11, 2021

Attending:

Abbe Bolich – President

Zandra Faris - Immediate Past President

Barbara St. Clair - 1st Vice President (Fundraising)

Joellyn Nobbe - 2nd Vice President (Member Services)

Monica Nagle – Secretary

Mark Jones - Director-at-Large

Fern Brown - Director-at-Large

Margaret Marshall - Director-at-Large

Barbara Anderson – Parliamentarian

Rick Coke - Director-at-Large

AgriLife:

Jeff Raska

Absent:

John Ellis - Treasurer

Tig Thompson - Statistician

Guests:

Cynthia Jones

Stephen Seewoester

Ned Buxton

Quorum: (Time)

The meeting was held via Zoom. It was called to order by President Abbe Bolich at 10:02am with a quorum present.

Opening Remarks/President's Report – Abbe Bolich

- There were no questions about the President's report.
- The new VMS system is up and running. DCMGs are encouraged to update their information on VMS, add a picture and log their hours.
- Raincatcher's Garden will be having their annual plant sale on Thursday, May 13th and Friday, May 14th. During this time, Denise Strueber will be selling MG Merchandise under the shade structure.

Board Meeting Minutes – Monica Nagle

Rick Coke made a motion to accept the meeting minutes from the April 13, 2021 as presented. Margaret Marshall seconded the motion.

The motion passed.

Report: Texas AgriLife Extension Service- Jeff Raska

COVID-19 Protocols:

- Texas A&M AgriLife is working back towards normalcy and will be back to full staff on 6/1/21.
- Jeff reviewed the COVID-19 protocol with Dr. Miller to decide what to do with the team. The Texas A&M University Administration Committee has decided on new protocols, but Jeff is still reviewing them for rollout to DCMGs. Jeff will communicate the new protocols to DCMGs next month. Since some facilities may have their own protocols, COVID-19 restrictions will be site-specific. Volunteers are being asked to adhere to the facility restrictions. Most facilities will require masks when indoors.

- Jayla Fry commented, through Jeff Raska, that the DCMG program cannot require volunteers to get the COVID-19 vaccine, nor can the DCMG program discriminate against those who have not received the vaccine.
- Per Jeff, some MGs feel like they are being discriminated against because they opted not to be vaccinated. HIPAA regulations forbid inquiring into the vaccination status of any volunteer. Volunteers cannot state that a group has been vaccinated. It was suggested that Mark Jones communicate this to the community project leaders.
- Cynthia Jones asked if COVID-19 preparedness plans are still required. Per Jeff, they will stay in place until further notice. No masks are required when working outside, but volunteers need to keep social distancing.
- What is the effective date on eliminating the outdoor mask requirement? Per Jeff, the mandate will be removed next week.
- Jeff would like to talk about COVID-19 protocol updates at the May advisory meeting.
- The DCMGA Board will need to decide if they want to continue with Zoom for the monthly meetings or go face-to-face. Zoom has been working well. If preferred, it is acceptable to continue this way.
- What about indoor programs for the public? Per Jeff, COVID-19 protocol for this is still in discussion.
- Jeff plans to hold more training sessions with the class of 2021 interns inside. A jelly-making class will be held on June 5th.
- Member requests for an LOA will be given with leniency throughout the next year.
- Jeff spoke to R&B1 volunteers about regulations that were not being followed.

- Jeff needs more time to review the Grow & Graze fundraiser for indoor eating protocol at Raincatcher's Garden.
- Fern Brown is doing a nice job managing the DCMG At-Home projects for the volunteers who are uncomfortable participating in projects on-site.

DCMG Association membership:

Jeff talked to Jayla Fry about DCMGA membership and project fundraisers. Jayla's feedback follows:

- DCMGA cannot force those who took the Master Gardener class to join the association.
- Proof of insurance cannot be made mandatory to join DCMGA or participate in projects.
A proposal was made to grant a scholarship to each Master Gardener intern who has not joined DCMGA. The scholarship will cover membership.
- Volunteers are not required to raise money needed for their projects. Fundraising requests will go to Barbara St. Clair. She will send them to Jeff, who may bring them to the board. Jeff commented that he will approve fundraising requests on a case-by-case basis.

Fundraising:

- Margaret Marshall commented that Sandi Means is creating a JotForm for grants and fundraising. Jeff requested that the form should be sent to himself and Barbara St. Clair for review before publishing the information.

DCMGA Membership:

- Cynthia Jones asked how neighboring counties handle volunteers who are not members of their county Master Gardener Association. Some counties responded that, if dues are not paid, that person is rendered inactive. However, this policy does not appear to be consistent across all counties. Jeff will consult with Denton County on their inactive status situation. Cynthia cautioned that we need a definition for inactive. How do the Master Naturalists handle this?

- Margaret Marshall brought up that about 15% of Dallas County Master Gardeners are not members of the Association. Zandra Faris said the decline in membership occurred mainly from 2017 to 2019. Some of the decline was the result of COVID-19. Jeff said he will talk to Tig Thompson to see if the membership decline has been slow or rapid.
- Barbara Anderson asked if DCMGA meeting announcements (emails) go to all Master Gardeners or just to DCMGA members. Cynthia Jones replied that the emails are sent to all Dallas County Master Gardeners. Barbara Anderson suggested dropping non-members from the email distribution list. Abbe Bolich commented that monthly meetings are open to the public. Barbara Anderson replied that her recommendation is to reduce the communication link emails (not monthly meetings) to members only.
- Barbara Anderson recommends that DCMGA establish an easier way for Master Gardeners to pay membership dues. Zandra Faris suggested adding this to the June DCMGA board meeting agenda. Abbe requested that the board review the revision made in November 2020 during the June meeting. Zandra Faris stated that Denton County Master Gardeners sign a volunteer agreement which includes a background check and payment of dues. Margaret Marshall suggested using JOT form for this.

Speakers Bureau:

- The Speakers Bureau can remain on Zoom if that is the preferred format.

Recurring/Unfinished Business:

- Funds from PlantTAGG have not been received yet for At-Home Botanist submissions.

Past President's Report - Zandra Faris

- Zandra researched financial best practices for non-profits. Please refer to the May 2021 Past President's Report for a summary of her findings.

- A tree team has been formed consisting of Sandi Means-Bannon, Linda Seidel, Alan Rister, Betsy See, Cindy Large, and Zandra Faris. The team will be working with Kerry Gray-Harrison, Garden Manager at the Texas Discovery Garden to identify trees within TDG for the purpose of educating the public on essential benefits of trees, homeowner guidance, and development of an interactive map that pinpoints tree locations/characteristics.
- Zandra reported that she has been unable to obtain a satisfactory response from Zoom to provide an account option that is better suited for the needs of DCMGA. DCMGA will continue to upgrade their Zoom account on a monthly basis if > 100 participants are needed.

1st VP Report: Fundraising-Barbara St. Clair

- There were no fundraising requests to review at the meeting.
- Denise Strueber has new merchandise that will be for sale at the Raincatcher's plant sale. Denise made \$2783 in merchandise sales at the plant/seed exchange with interns.

2nd VP Report: Membership-Joellyn Nobbe

Monthly Meetings:

- Less than 100 people attended the DCMGA Monthly Meeting in April.
- Rusty Allen from North Haven Gardens will be the guest speaker at the May meeting.
- Adam Black will be the guest speaker at the June Meeting. Adam offers 3 topics:
 - Under-utilized Texas Native Plants
 - New Trees for Landscape Diversification (includes non-natives but can modify)
 - Native Cacti and Succulents suitable for Texas Gardens

The Board selected 'Under-utilized Texas Native Plants'.

Joellyn offered Adam \$100 for his presentation.

- Can DCMGA use the Coit Road building for monthly meeting(s)? Check with Scott Hudson of the North Texas Chapter of Master Naturalists to see if there is a fee for the room. Cynthia Jones suggested that DCMGA work with Scott Hudson to see if we can do some collaboration with NTMN. (Combined meeting?)

Miscellaneous:

- Joellyn asked if the Native Plant Society of Texas (NPSOT) offers help for native gardens? No, support is given through the Master Naturalists.
- Jeff commented that Master Gardeners will not be a labor force for the Texas A&M Research facility on Coit Rd. They should be using graduate students for research. MGs used to be a working partner in the research.

Communications Report – Cynthia Jones

PlantTAGG:

- Cynthia recommends taking the PlantTAGG ‘show on the road’.
- From Cynthia Jones: “PlantTAGG rollout for the first four DCMG projects (Raincatcher’s of Midway Hills, R&B 1, White Rock Lake Gardens, and Lakewood Elementary School) was delayed until May to allow gardens to recover more fully after Winter Storm Uri. The new partnership between Dallas County Master Gardeners and PlantTAGG was featured on the Dallas Public Library’s Grow with Us virtual series on Monday, May 10th as part of the rollout process. Andrew Levi, founder of PlantTAGG, included step-by-step directions for enabling the web app. Recordings of the program will also be available. We will recruit more MGs for the associated At Home Botanist (AHB) program. In April, 33 of the At-Home-Botanist submissions were successfully completed and entered into the PlantTAGG data base. A donation of \$330 was subsequently received by the DCMGA.”
- Cynthia would like to offer the ‘Grow with Us’ recording on the DCMGA YouTube channel.
- A question was asked if the PlantTAGG partnership is with the association or DCMGs? Jeff commented that it is with the association.

- Cynthia commented that Andrew Levi, PlantTAGG founder, is creating a video to assist in getting started with, and how to use, PlantTAGG. A suggestion was made to show this at the next DCMGA monthly meeting.
- Cynthia would like to have another plea sent out to members to become At-Home Botanists.
- Cynthia would like to get more community gardens on PlantTAGG.
- Cynthia would like to have PlantTAGG on the monthly meeting agenda as much as possible. Joellyn said she will add this. Cynthia will send Joellyn the name of the person who will speak about it.
- Zandra Faris mentioned that Helping Hands will have an article on this and the need for more At-Home-Botanist support. Zandra would like to see an article in Helping Hands every month or every-other month to keep it in the forefront of people's minds. "Not everyone reads HH every month."
- Cynthia Jones would like all board members to be PlantTAGG ambassadors by putting their own yards in PlantTAGG. Volunteers need to get over the fear of new technology.

Communications Team:

- A request to submit photos and brief comments was sent to all Master Gardeners with good response. The entries are being posted on Instagram at regular intervals as deemed appropriate by the team of Callie Works-Leary and Kim Aman.

Directors' Report: Website-Margaret Marshall

Forms:

- Sandi is working on creating a JotForm for the Grant Application Request and the Fundraising Request forms. These requests are being moved to JOT form this month.

- On the fundraising report form, a request was made to add a radio button for the type of payment the fundraiser will accept.
- Joellyn commented that the COVID-19 JotForm has disappeared from the website. Margaret Marshall will follow-up.

Website Update:

Sandi plans to begin seeking bids for the website rebuild.

The following positions have been filled:

- Assistance with website rebuild - Sandi Means Bannon, interim webmaster, plans to ask for help from the volunteers listed below as needed.
- Assistant Webmaster – Sandi is going to talk with Katie Fairbank about this position.
- Website Technical Director - Kanchan Walker (will start when we start on new site)
- Website SEO Manager - Edward Kooi and Melissa Asgari are working on an SEO strategy plan
- Technology Oversight Premium Services - Neal Howard. This position has been renamed Technology innovation and integration leader.
- Technology Help Desk – Sandi is going to talk with Neal Howard about this position.
- Leader of Social Media - this title has been deleted and Kim Aman is volunteering as the leader of Instagram and Callie Works Leary as leader Pinterest.

Directors' Report: Scholarship-Rick Coke

- Rick talked to the Grapevine Garden Club, who offers two \$4k scholarships per year, budget permitting. The scholarship process is:
 - Students apply -> selection is made -> student(s) let club know when/how to submit the scholarship money.

- The club sets the criteria to keep the scholarship.
- Any interaction with the school is minimal.
- Rick talked to Kara Casey, Director of Urban Agriculture and Renewable Resources at DCCCD, who offered to set up a conference call/Zoom meeting with Texas A&M-Commerce. That will provide us with contacts for UNT-Dallas, TAMUC and DCCCD.
- Rick researched the legalities of how other organizations handle their scholarship programs. Feedback includes:
 - Verify the document that establishes DCMGA as a 501c3 organization clearly allows the offering of a scholarship as a part of our mission. The authorization does not have to be explicit, but it needs to imply clearly that such a program is authorized.
 - DCMGA would need to establish rules to prohibit self-benefit of the scholarship. The applicant pool would need to be established broadly and objectively. In addition, DCMGA would need formal rules to prohibit awarding the scholarship to relatives or friends of anyone in DCMGA who could influence the award. This would exclude friends/relatives of anyone involved in evaluation of applications and of any director or officer of DCMGA. There should be no hint that the scholarship recipient is predetermined.
 - The scholarship must be fully compatible and consistent with the stated goals of the association.
- Zandra Faris asked if Rick needs any help to keep the program progressing. Fern offered to assist.

Directors' Report: Advisory Committee-Fern Brown

No meeting in April. (No minutes to discuss.)

Directors' Report: Project Leadership-Mark Jones

Consolidated Purchases:

- Mari Allen-Sharp has been working with vendors to provide a consolidated order from the DCMG projects. The goal is to obtain price discounts for volume orders.
- Vendor interest has been poor due to the perceived low purchase volume.

- Mark commented that the February snowstorm impacted the supply and demand of the wholesalers.
- Jeff mentioned that many nurseries have contracts for plants well in advance. DCMGA will be low on their priority list.
- TDG is looking at doing a soil purchase. Mari may work with Soil Builders. (Prior issue working with them.)
- Abbe asked if all projects know that Mari is establishing a relationship with the vendors. Mark responded 'No.' He will bring this up with the project leaders.
- Margaret Marshall suggested that a radio button be added to a fundraiser request to alert Mari of the need for a purchase.
- Abbe would like project leaders brought up-to-speed on the proposed procurement process.
- The first rollout of this process will be the pansy sale at Raincatcher's.

Statistics/Data Report: Tig Thompson

- Tig Thompson sent the proposed TMG Volunteer Agreement to Abbe Bolich. This agreement includes what is expected and/or required by each volunteer.
- Tig will review the agreement with Barbara Anderson and Barbara St. Clair for correct wording of the insurance needs. Barbara Anderson said the language about insurance from the association needs to be clear.
- Barbara Anderson commented that DCMGA needs a list of benefits for membership. What do you get for \$25?
- Cynthia suggested using verbiage that states "While you're active, you get....."
- Abbe Bolich asked to table this for the advisory meeting.

New Business:

- Jeff Raska commented that there are two major projects coming up:
 - Hensley Naval Field (old airport on Mtn Creek) – on the horizon.
 - City of Dallas – Food Forest in Parks (FDA funding)
- Jeff Raska commented that he and Liz Rudd met at a girl scout stem camp to scope out supporting raised beds for education purposes. Will this be associated with 4H?

- The board is concerned about spreading ourselves any thinner with-respect-to volunteer needs. Some ventures will be teamed with NTMN.

Volunteer Hours:

- Cynthia Jones asked if we could offer an incentive of education or volunteer hours if their own garden is enabled in PlantTAGG. Jeff responded “Yes”, this can be either.
- Margaret Marshall asked if Master Gardeners can include the Instagram post time as volunteer time? Jeff Raska thought they were already doing this. Cynthia Jones suggested that we remind volunteers of this opportunity.
- Zandra Faris mentioned that Callie Works-Leary put out a Google doc form that is easy to follow for posts. She recommends that all board members use the form to submit something. Joellyn will ask Callie Works-Leary to talk about this at the next monthly meeting.

Additional Items for board considerations:

Nothing to report.

Adjournment:

At the conclusion of business, Zandra Faris, Past President, made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Margaret Marshall, Director-At-Large, seconded the motion. The motion carried. President Bolich adjourned the meeting at 11:42 am.

Supporting Documents:

DCMGA President's Report, May 2021, 1 page

DCMGA April 2021 Board Meeting Minutes, 13 pages

Balance Sheet as of April 31st, 2021, 1 page

General Journal as of April 2021, 3 pages

General Ledger as of April 31st, 2021, 10 pages

Income Statement, April 31, 2021, 1 page

DCMGA Financial Review, April 31st, 2021, 3 pages

DCMGA Immediate Past President's Report, May 2021, 1 page

DCMGA 1st VP, Fundraising Report, 1 page

DCMGA 2nd VP, Membership Report, 1 page

Director-At-Large Report: Website Update, April 2021, 1 page

Director-At-Large Report: Scholarships, April 2021, 1 page

Director-At-Large Report: Community Projects, May 2021, 1 page

Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes (none this month)

Communications Update for May 2021, 1 page

Statistical Report, May 2021, 1 page

Statistical Report Graphs, May 2021, 1 page