

TOS Board Meeting - March 29, 2022

Present: Frances Cerbins, Kendra Kocab, Shelia Hargis, Randy Pinkston, Susan Foster, Clay Taylor, Gailon Brehm, John Berner, Laura Wilson, Byron Stone

Not present: Christine Turnbull, D.D. Currie

Frances Cerbins, filling in for Christine Turnbull, began the meeting at 7:00 PM.

January 26, 2022 Minutes

Randy Pinkston moved to approve the minutes as written. Laura Wilson seconded, and the motion passed.

Treasurer's report

John Berner went over the budget, looking at where we are now versus last year. Two big expenditures were the purchase of additional land at Magic Ridge and the money that went toward the Steve Gross Memorial. The request for more donations to contribute to the memorial has also been successful, with nearly half the requested funds raised. The online merchandise store on the TOS website seems to have been successful. John had questions about ensuring sales tax is being collected. He will talk to Judy Kestner about this.

Gailon Brehm motioned to approve moving \$20,000 from the operations account to the banking account should it be needed to offset the recent land purchase. Shelia seconded, and the motion passed.

Investments

Gailon Brehm talked about the financial snapshot. Our total investments have increased more than 50% since 2019, despite the losses in the market. With market fluctuations, we are about even with last fall.

Elections/Ballot

Gailon Brehm said everyone should have received a ballot in the mail. The invoice for the cost of mailing the ballots was sent to the treasurer. Ballots are due back before April 15. We need at least 100 back to have a valid election. Gailon has a write-up on how he does the balloting for when someone takes over in the future.

Spring Meeting

Kendra Kocab asked about getting shirts for the meeting. She will talk with Judy Kestner and Clay Taylor about getting Dennis Shepler's artwork on a t-shirt to sell at the meeting. The leftover inventory could be sold in the online store. Kendra also said we will have an in-person board meeting in Lake Jackson, and TOS members are welcome to attend.

Sanctuary Updates

Shelia Hargis installed new signs at Hooks Woods with QR codes for people to pay the entrance fee and/or become a member. We also have signs at the exit saying if you enjoyed your visit, you can use this QR code to make a donation to TOS. Signs are also at the back entrance.

Shelia shared photos and video of the newest water feature and Steve Gross Memorial bird blind. We will add a sign about the memorial, potentially with a QR code. Clay Taylor asked if the blind would be painted or stained. There are no plans for that, but we may discuss this later.

Byron Stone said we closed on the new piece of property at Magic Ridge that includes the oak tree lot and a parcel swap. Gailon Brehm asked for copies of documents related to property deeds, etc so he can maintain a comprehensive collection. In February, Brent Ortego, Dora Ann, and Byron planted 40 small native Tamaulipan thorn scrub plants (from an anonymous donor) on the lot that had been illegally cleared by a neighbor. They are trying to recruit locals to monitor the plants and add water through the spring and summer. There is native regrowth on the lot as well. The house has still not been moved off the property. Once it is moved, we will pour a slab so an RVer can keep tabs on the sanctuary. Mark Elwonger has precise GPS equipment and believes some property owners on the bayside of the lagoon have built piers that extend further than their own property lines. Byron is asking our attorney what is required to address this. Byron also said that despite TOS being awarded a judgment in court, we still haven't been paid for the illegally cleared lot. He will follow up to see what actions can be taken. There may be a work party at Magic Ridge in the fall where we can also do community outreach. Byron has plans to show a biologist from Manomet who is doing shorebird surveys around Magic Ridge.

John Berner talked about Sabine Woods. We split the cost of some trees with Golden Triangle Audubon and they will be planted on a work day. Porta-potties have been installed for spring migration. John is trying to talk with a judge about acquiring the land buffer that adjoins Sabine on three sides. He inquired about installing signs at Sabine similar to the ones at Hooks with QR codes. Shelia said the cell coverage at Sabine is not as good, so they may not work as seamlessly. She suggested putting QR codes on business cards for people to take with them and pay later if they can't get cell service. Shelia can put John in contact with Cheryl Johnson about signs. John also suggested installing similar signs at Magic Ridge.

Membership committee

Shelia Hargis said we have an increase in membership because Laura Wilson has been recruiting student members and spreading the word in her region. She thinks it really helps for board members to get out and promote the organization. Laura said she encountered people who thought the "society" is by invitation only, so she has been passing out her card and our brochures, talking to local organizations, and doing presentations. Clay Taylor asked if TOS is going to have any kind of presence at the Birdiest Festival in Corpus (the weekend before TOS meeting). Clay will talk with Joel about this.

Archives

Randy Pinkston said Texas A&M has sold the land and the buildings where the collections have been housed (and where our archives have been stored). We will not be able to keep our archives in the new building, which will be completed in 2024. Randy went over what all is in the archives. In April, Randy will meet with Eric Carpenter, who has offered to house the Texas photo record files and anything related to the TBRC. Beyond that, Randy would like feedback

via email from board members about what documents we should keep (old CBC paperwork, private notecards from birders, etc). Susan Foster said she can give Connie Hagar's notecards to Friends of Connie Hagar in Rockport. Randy said we may need to pay a professional service to relocate the documents we decide to keep. Sam Houston State University may be willing to re-home the archives.

Land proposal Rio Brazos Audubon

Clay Taylor talked about a landowner offering to donate 8 acres to Rio Brazos Audubon (RBA). RBA is a small organization with no experience owning land and isn't sure they want to accept the donation. Clay wondered if TOS wanted to accept the donation and work with RBA on maintaining the property. There is currently a lawsuit about the land's management, which is a concern for both TOS and RBA. Shelia Hargis said we agreed in past meetings that land contiguous to our current sanctuaries is a priority, and we have a big challenge managing our current properties. The board agreed not to take on this particular property at this time, and Frances Cerbins said we should have a land acquisition policy in place.