Council of Chapters Meeting Minutes 6/25/2023
Online Zoom Meeting
taken by Melanie Simon – CoC Chair

Melanie Simon called the meeting to order at 06:35 PM

In attendance (23) – 18 of 33 Chapters
* indicates proxy or guest

Citrus – Jeffrey Bippert
Citrus - Gail Taylor*
Coccoloba – Ben Johnson
Eugenia – David Martin
Dade – Lydia Cuni
Hernando – Janet Grabowski*
Ixia – Cate Hurlbut
Lake Beautyberry – Tina Mertz
Longleaf Pine - Kimberley Bremner
Magnolia – Maddie Snuggs
Martin County - Dianna Wentink
Martin County - Pete Grannis
Marion Big Scrub – Deborah Curry
Passionflower – Melanie Simon - Chair
Pawpaw – Karen Walter
Pawpaw – Susan Anderson*
Pinellas – David Perkey
Pine Lily – Tayler Figueroa
Sarracenia – Lynn Artz
Serenoa – Pamela Callender
Tarflower – Jennifer Ferngren
FNPS Executive Director - Lynda Davis*
FNPS Treasurer - Chris Moran*

Not in attendance: Lisa Stanley – Vice Chair, Megan Prats – Secretary

Noted documents are posted on the Council Website: https://council.fnpschapters.org

Regular Agenda Items

- Minutes from 5/28/23 meeting
  - Cate H. motioned to approve the May 28, 2023 meeting minutes. Deborah C. seconded the motion. Motion passed unanimously.

- Next Meeting July 25th at 6:30pm

News/Announcements/Reminders

- FNPS Annual Membership Meeting – June 17
  - Recording at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=G116GrQ9uBU if you missed the live meeting

- Volunteer Hours Reporting
  - 2023 hours total almost 27,000 as of 6/17. 90% are Chapter hours. 82% are mission-related (not Operations/Management).
There are still several larger chapters who are not reporting or appear to be under-reporting. Some Chapters have active coordinators who send out monthly reminders and collect and report hours including Operations/Management hours for volunteers.

A good place to start (because mission-related hours are most important and it is easy) is to enter bulk hours (# attendees x activity length) for program meetings (Education), business meetings, field trips, native garden workdays, plant rescues, etc. You just need to collect sign in sheets at activities or do headcounts. Can also estimate Operations/Management hours by tracking for a month or two and using that to report monthly hours on an ongoing basis.

Volunteer hour reporting can now be accessed through the Membership Database (forms.fnps.org). Form for reporting hours is under Resources/Society/Volunteer Hours Reporting. Instructions are under Resources/Council of Chapters/Council Google Drive/Volunteer Hours Reporting/Training.

- Direct link for reporting hours: https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAlpQL5d-IR5D7KMyMMQpxGRQIkJ_a7hMFzd8HdsDd-O_9ic4jwGzg/viewform
- Direct link for instructions (including 1 page how to sheet): https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1A7uDumpLyMuXGbjKZbaBpBjpa_Zv7E5U

- Insurance
  - Lynda D. is still investigating and will report at a later meeting.

**Council Initiatives and Ongoing Business**

- **2023 FNPS Member Survey**
  - Wrapping up getting responses this week.
  - Will present Melanie and discuss survey results at the next Council meeting.

**New Business**

- **Sales Tax/Corporate Structures/Merchandise**
  - Chris M., our FNPS Treasurer, joined the meeting to answer questions about sales tax.
  - Karen W. explained Pawpaw bulk-purchased chapter logo T-shirts and did not pay sales tax (used exemption) and sold them to individual Chapter members. Do they need to collect/pay sales tax on the amount members paid Pawpaw for the T-shirt or can they treat it as a repayment to Pawpaw? Chris replied there are few exceptions for sales tax (mostly religious or children’s charities) and what Pawpaw did would be considered a resale, so sales tax is due.
  - The general rule, per Chris, is that if you did not pay sales tax (used nonprofit exemption) on purchased items for resale, you must pay sales tax when you sell the items even if you’re not selling them for profit. If you pay sales tax when you buy merchandise (i.e., don’t use the sales tax exemption) you could probably argue you don’t have to pay sales tax on resales.
  - Kimberley B. asked if Chapters have to pay sales tax if the Chapter purchases items (for example, T-shirts) and gives them to members for a donation. Chapters wouldn’t have to pay sales tax, but should send each member a letter stating the value of what they received for their donation.
  - Susan A. noted (in chat) that some counties have different sales tax percentages (adds).
  - Gail T. asked what other merchandise Chapters buy/sell. Responses were plants, T-shirts, seeds, hats, and books. Same sales tax rules apply to all these.
  - Chapter corporate structure was also discussed. Not all Chapters are incorporated, have a 501(c)(3) designation, have an EIN, have applied for sales tax exemptions, or have registered with the
Department of Agriculture as a charity. Not all Chapters are part of GEL (Group Exemption Letter). So there is no uniform chapter structure or “rules” for Treasurers. Lynda D. and Chris have been studying this and considering ways to make the structures more uniform and take some of the administrative burden off Chapters. They may need to confirm current structures and may add questions to the Council Survey (see below) to aid in this evaluation.

- If you have further questions or need clarification on a different scenario, you can email Chris at cmoran@fnps.org.

- **Plant and Seed Exchanges**
  - Melanie noted that the software (https://www.librarycat.org/) that Suzie Shaeffer is using for the Pawpaw lending library could also be used for plant and seed exchanges.
  - Various ways Chapters currently do exchanges were discussed. Melanie noted she would take plants to meetings to give to attendees (especially new members who are just starting to plant natives) if she knew someone wanted them, but it is too much work to transport them and then have to take them home again. Citrus does a plant and seed swap every year at a designated day/time and location (used to be members only, but open to the public this year). Pawpaw does a similar thing, but everyone gets a number and can choose a plant when their number is called. Ixia does the same thing at the start of meetings. Hernando sells plants using PayPal.
  - Karen W. noted that mailing seeds is expensive and it’s time consuming collecting the money and checking that seeds are going to an appropriate location.

- **Chapter Location Maps**
  - Dianna W. had mentioned that she has trouble visualizing where Chapters are located, so Melanie was thinking of creating a map of Chapter locations.
  - Lynda said Valerie is already working on one.
  - Valerie is also doing mapping to show where all Chapter members are located.

- **Council Survey**
  - We are planning to do the short Council Survey starting July 15. Last year’s survey had 3 questions about Chapter status, Chapter challenges, and training/workshop suggestions.
  - The survey will provide useful information about trends and also ideas for workshops the Council can host (last year we did Publicity & Outreach and Membership Database workshops based on survey responses).
  - We will ask those questions again and potentially add a few questions about Chapter corporate structure such as “Is your Chapter a 501(c)(3) corporation?” Lynda D. and Chris M. will supply the additional questions.
  - Discussed additions/deletions to the choices for the “Chapter Challenges” question.
    - Can delete questions about Covid and virtual technology.
    - David P. suggested Transitioning from Covid (Now totally in-person, still using Zoom, hybrid?)
    - Cate H. suggested post-Covid in-person attendance at meetings
    - Deborah C. suggested finding a venue for in-person meetings (new rules, booking rooms, closed venues, reduced hours)
    - Burden of administrative “housekeeping”
  - Janet G. noted that they have had very strong in-person attendance since Covid.
  - Chapter Reps should discuss this with their Boards. Last year’s survey results are posted on the Council website for reference.

- **Florida Federation of Garden Clubs (FFGC)**
  - Lynn A. provided more details on partnering with FFGC to plant native trees on Florida Arbor Day – 1/19/24. She is coordinating the efforts of the garden clubs and has gotten feedback from 53 of the
153 clubs so far. 13 of the responding clubs would like help with selecting a tree, sourcing a tree, digging a hole and planting, or finding a site.

- Lynn has found a grant that will provide each club $100 to buy a native tree that supports biodiversity, preferably one of Doug Tallamy’s keystone species.
- Lynn asked if nearby FNPS chapters would be willing to partner with garden clubs to make tree recommendations and help find a nursery that can provide a tree.
- Lynn has identified 9 FNPS chapters that are near the clubs asking for help. Chapters indicated their willingness to help nearby garden clubs responded in chat.
  - Paynes Prairie (not present); Citrus (yes); Longleaf Pine (yes); Cocclooba (yes); Magnolia (maybe); Ixia (yes); Palm Beach County (not present); Heartland (not present); Cuplet Fern (not present).
- There will also be a larger scale tree planting at FFGC headquarters in Orange County – about a dozen trees. They need help identifying and sourcing multiple species and perhaps developing a design.
  - Tarflower chapter indicated they would be willing to help.
- Dade County clubs are planning to plant 100 torchwood trees.
  - Dade chapter indicated they would be willing to help.
- There is also a small grant from NWF to obtain small trees to give away on Arbor Day. Help is needed to select and source these, although locations where help is needed are not known.
  - Several chapters indicated they are willing to help: Serenoa, Pawpaw, Passionflower, Marion Big Scrub, and Lake Beautyberry.
- Chapters who did not attend the meeting and are interested in partnering with a garden club or helping can contact Lynn at lynn_artz@hotmail.com. Lynn will follow up via email and at the next meeting. Chapters can also contact local garden clubs directly.

Open Floor

- **Membership Management**
  - Kimberley B. relayed that several members have expressed concerns.
    - Memberships have expired because members received a notice months in advance, but no reminder, so they forgot. Timing of renewal reminders should be looked at.
    - Newer members have commented that the online renewal is not very easy.
    - Membership “cards” are postcard size which makes it harder to take to nurseries for discounts. Used to be a cut-out, but is not one now.
  - Melanie noted she sees a lot of active members on the “lapsed membership” list and that many say they have renewed when contacted.
  - Deborah C. noted that a Sustaining member commented that she has been told her membership has lapsed several times.
  - Melanie will advise Lynda of these comments to make sure they have been addressed.

Motion to Adjourn

Cate H. motioned to adjourn. Gail T. and Deborah C. seconded the motion. Motion passed unanimously.

Meeting Adjourned at 8:01 PM