



Florida Native Plant Society

Council of Chapters Meeting Minutes 11/22/2020

Online Zoom Meeting

taken by Melanie Simon – CoC Secretary

Kara Driscoll called the meeting to order at 06:34 PM

In attendance (19) – 15 of 33 Chapters

*** indicates proxy or guest**

Broward – Stephanie Dunn	Pawpaw – Karen Walter
Coccoloba – Lucy Breitung	Pawpaw – Sande Habali
Dade – Kurt Birchenough	Pinellas – David Perkey
Eugenia – David Martin	Sarracenia – Jeannie Brodhead
Hernando – Janet Grabowski	Sarracenia – David Roddenberry
Longleaf Pine – Gabriel Campbell	Suncoast – Virginia Overstreet
Magnolia – Jan Blue	Tarflower – Mandy Morgan
Naples – Kara Driscoll - CoC Chair	Wayne Baker – CoC Vice Chair
Nature Coast – Diane Caruso	FNPS President – Bonnie Basham
Passionflower – Melanie Simon - CoC Secretary	

➤ **Regular Agenda Items**

• **Minutes from previous meeting –**

Melanie S. noted two errors – Stephanie Dunn was not in attendance and Helen Laurence, not Gail Taylor, commented on Spanish translation.

Lucy B. motioned to approve the October 25, 2020 meeting minutes with the noted corrections. Dave P. seconded the motion. Kurt B. abstained. Motion passed.

• **Reminders:** No December meeting - next meeting scheduled for January 24th at 6:30 on Zoom.

• **News/Announcements**

- Janet G. announced she is taking on the role of Chapter President and Heather Sharkey will be the Hernando Chapter Rep.
- Kara D. pointed out that Zoom has a “Raise Hand” feature which makes it easy to vote without unmuting.
- License plate design is finalized was announced in the Sabal Minor. Web address to see design and pre-order the plate is in the Sabal Minor and link is posted on the home page of the Council website under Announcements/Reminders.

- Kara D. summarized updates from the FNPS Board:
 - Policy Committee has a 2020 year-end report posted on the FNPS Forum under the most recent Board of Directors meeting.
 - Legislative Report for the year is also posted.
 - Endowment Research Grant (up to \$1,500 for 1 year) is available to Chapters or Society members to research understudied plants, especially if that research can help inform land management and conservation of that species. Link will be posted on the Council website.
 - FNPS has expanded the announcement of grants and scholarship opportunities to include several historically black universities: Bethune-Cookman University, Edward Waters College, Florida A&M University, and Florida Memorial University.
- *Follow-up:* Kara D. will confirm how chapters can get copies of the “Mow Less” Homeowner’s Guide. Guide will be updated so Chapters can add their chapter information.
- **Ongoing Business**
 - **Council Orientation/Website**
 - Melanie S. explained that a Chapter Rep “Welcome Letter” (emailed with Nov 22 meeting notice) was drafted to securely distribute details on obtaining logins for Council communications. She asked everyone to take a look at it and provide feedback – especially other orientation information and/or instructions which should be included. Chapter Reps can also use the letter to keep their logins handy and to pass to whomever replaces them as Chapter Rep.
 - The checklist on the “Welcome Letter” mirrors what is on the website, which contains details about each list item.
 - Kara D. noted we are trying to make things easier for Chapter Representatives to step into the role.
 - Diane C. commented that simpler is better, so it is not overwhelming, and that most of what Chapter Reps need to know will be discovered by attending meetings.
 - *Follow-up:* Everyone should provide feedback on the website to help Melanie identify other orientation information that should be included on the website. There is the original (old) “How To” tab for reference and a pared-down (new) “How To” tab. Please let her know what is missing – what content people need convenient access to that is not included.
 - **Closed Captioning**
 - Kara D. has not had time to do a budget proposal and will have less time since she will be defending her thesis this spring, so finding a service is tabled for now unless someone has time to take it on.
 - Kara suggested uploading presentation recordings to YouTube and using their closed captioning service. Not perfect, but free.
 - Lucy B. asked how important closed captioning is in terms of all the things Chapters have to do. Kara commented it is by no means required, but it will further efforts to be more inclusive, not only for people who are deaf, but also for those who are hard of hearing.

- Follow-up: Kara D. or Wayne B. will assist anyone who wants to do closed captioning.
- **May Conference**
 - Melanie S. reported that the conference committee has been interviewing people to act as a conference host, so pricing decisions are still in work. They are thinking price range will be \$25-\$35 and have not made a decision about students yet.
 - Melanie said the Council has been invited to send a representative to sit in on Conference Committee meetings so information can be passed directly to Council Reps. Meetings are Fridays at 1:15 per Bonnie B. Diane C. offered to represent the Council.
- **Council Survey**
 - Melanie S. reported 76% of Chapters have responded. 60% report they feel they are stable, 24% struggling, and 16% doing great. No clear common reasons for statuses – looked at membership and while “great” chapters have cumulatively lost fewer members, not all “great” chapters have increased members and not all “struggling” chapters have lost members.
 - Melanie S. expressed the opinion that while we wait to be able to resume “normal” activities, the key is for chapters to continue activities and communications to keep members engaged even if participation is lower.
 - “Encouraging Participation in Chapter Governance” (21%) is the top identified challenge followed by “Conducting activities with COVID” (20%). “Membership growth”, “Publicity and Outreach” and “Encouraging participation in Chapter Activities” were also identified (13% each). Other issues had less than 10% responses.
 - Melanie read a comment by one respondent summarizing chapter challenges which appear common to many chapters – finding volunteers, spread out and disorganized publicity, varying levels of participation in activities, difficulties coming up with COVID activities, and lapses in completing chapter administrative tasks.
 - The survey report is posted on the Council website, including a list of discussion topics/initiatives suggested by respondents. Melanie asked that for feedback about which ones the Council should address first and suggested a workshop/discussion on participation in governance and is willing to set something up.
 - Follow-up: Kara D. suggested having an optional, recurring workshop session to address issues open to all FNPS members. Dave P. said that was a good idea. Kara will follow up.

➤ **New Business**

- **Nominating Committee**
 - Melanie S. announced we need a Nominating Committee to put together a slate for the Council Chair position election. Committee needs to be appointed this month according to the election schedule in the new Council Guidance document.
 - Kara D. asked if anyone was interested in serving as Chair. Melanie pointed out it is the Nominating Committee’s job to contact Chapter Reps and put together a slate.
 - Melanie S. explained the Council Chair needs to be a past or current Chapter Rep in response to Kara’s question.

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- Janet G. volunteered to serve.
- Follow-up: There are supposed to be three committee members, so Melanie will solicit others and work with Janet on what needs to be done.
- **Regional Meetings**
 - Tabled since Pat Burgos was not present.
 - Kara D. encouraged chapters to reach out to neighboring chapters. She reported she has encouraged her chapter (Naples) to reach out to Coccolobo and Mangrove.
 - Mandy M. (in chat) reported Tarflower is planning a camping trip to Cracker Creek and waiting to hear back from Pawpaw to coordinate a hike/outdoor dinner. Sande H. (in chat) said she hadn't heard about it, possibly because Pawpaw is in the process of changing presidents.
- **Educational Brochures**
 - Wendy Poag had requested Council feedback on educational brochures so she could submit a budget to the FNPS Board, but was not present.
 - Since Wendy was not present, Kara D. read through Wendy's email with questions:
 - Would Chapters like to see a Spanish version of the "Mow Less" Homeowners Guide (posted on the Council website)? Melanie S., Diane C. and Jeannie B. responded yes.
 - Should the planned regional "Good Neighbor" brochure (model posted on the Council website) also be translated?
 - Should we work towards converting some or all of the regional "Native Landscaping" brochures into Spanish?
 - Do Chapters need additional copies of the "Native Landscaping" brochure? Kara suggested a coordinator for brochure distribution.
 - Would a kids coloring book be a good idea?
 - Maybe we only need online downloadable documents in this day of COVID?
 - Follow-up: A survey will be sent out with Wendy's questions. Chapter governance should be consulted for responses.
 - Lucy B. asked how Chapters know if they need a brochure in Spanish. Kara D. responded there is not set criteria, but it is encouraged to broaden the audience for the FNPS mission.
 - Kurt B. commented that unless you have Spanish brochures available to offer people you're not going to know if you need them.
 - Comments from chat: Wayne B., Kurt B., Mandy M. and Bonnie B. commented that Spanish translations should be done. Kurt observed need would likely depend on the region. Wayne commented as much as possible should be translated, especially in areas with higher Spanish-speaking populations, regardless of current connections with chapters. Melanie S. suggested some should definitely be translated so Chapters can access how to attract members in other demographics, but need and cost should be assessed before translating every brochure. Jeannie B. commented that even if N. Florida there is Spanish speakers visiting their chapter booth at festivals.

- **Coloring book feedback:** Kara D. likes the idea. Melanie S. commented she likes the idea as well - her chapter has had a kids coloring table at events as a way to draw in the parents. In chat, Wayne B, Karen W., Sande H., and Mandy M. commented they also like the coloring book idea. Stephanie D. suggested possible artists (in chat): Kate Dolamore, Deanna Derosia, and Kim Heise.
- Sande H. asked if the “Mow Less” brochure was final. Observed that the brochure talks about the Florida Invasive Species Partnership, but does not explain why invasive species are bad or give any examples. Kara D. commented that the “Good Neighbor – Living with Nature” brochure will go into more detail on invasives and suggested Sande contact Wendy.
- Sande encouraged everyone to look at their city/county code enforcement because she found that **her city (Port Orange) has invasives listed under its Code Enforcement Landscaping Suggestions**. Diane C. agreed 100% that invasive plants aren’t recognized by most people. Kara suggested the Council could work on invasives education.
- **Council Strategic Plan**
 - Need to define operational goals and aspirational goals for the coming year. Since it was after 7:30 Kara proposed postponing this discussion to a workshop in December or early January.
 - Kara D. explained that the three operational goals she’s had since she’s been Council Chair – updating the SOP, updating the website, and Chapter Rep orientation – were all aimed at getting the Council to run better and if there are any ideas to make the Council run more efficiently or any projects the Council should work these could be included in the strategic plan.
- **Roundtables/Workshops**
 - Kara D. asked Reps to advise her if there are topics they would like to have a roundtable discussion or workshop on.
 - Follow-up: Kara D. said she would send out a survey or poll on workshop topics and dates and that attendance at these will be optional.
 - Kara D. explained that the Council has its own Zoom account, so it is available any time we want to organize a meeting or roundtable discussion/workshop.

➤ **Open Floor**

- Diane C. said Sunday evenings are difficult for people with families. Kara D. suggested we poll Reps to evaluate continuing to have Council meetings on Sunday evenings.
- Follow-up: Melanie S. will send out a meeting day/time survey.
- Kara asked if there was anything to put on the agenda for the next meeting. No one commented.
- Kara offered to get things sorted out if anyone has any concerns or questions.

Lucy B. made a motion to adjourn.
Janet G. seconded the motion. Motion passed unanimously.

Meeting Adjourned at 7:40 PM