

Houston County Master Gardeners' Meeting

Date: 12/15/2020

Present: Mary Thompson, Mary Zaffke, Jean Davy, Nora Beckjord, Richard Bartz, Bonnie Giesler, Barb Hefte, Janene Hosch, Loretta Knutson, Kris Litscher Lee, Linda Lind, Anna May, Bev Nelson, Vicki Otto, Doug Thompson, Charmaine Uphaus, Lane Zaffke, Deb Zillmer, Nancy Gulbranson, Mike Cruse

The meeting was called to order at 5:31 p.m. on December 15, 2020 by Mary Thompson, Chair, via Zoom.

We watched a beautiful slide-show presentation that Bonnie put together. We saw pictures of winter interest, winter pots and holiday greenery that MG's sent to Bonnie for the presentation.

Meeting started after the presentation.

On motion, the December 15 Agenda was approved. (with the addition of Flower of the Year).

On motion the minutes of the November 17 meeting were approved.

The Treasurer's Report: Jean Davy 's reported that our account numbers remain the same as last month:

Checking account balance: \$376.89, Savings account balance: \$369.18, CD: \$3036.66. Total: \$3782.73. No activity this past month and ABC hasn't cashed their \$200 check yet.

On motion, Finance Report was approved.

Report from Extension: Mike C. had nothing new from extension. He said he thinks any in-person events will be cancelled through June, 2021. He said Fillmore County cancelled all 2021 events. Mike is going to check on Pamela Rollins's status as an MG Intern. **We will need her contact info.**

Report from State Advisory Board: Mary Thompson had no new news because the Advisory Board hasn't met. Next meeting will be end of January.

Ongoing/ Old Business:

Heritage House:

Nothing new to report. As of December 18, the project is complete and Habitat for Humanity will move on to new projects. Sherry, the homeowner, moves in sometime in February and our work on the project will resume in the Spring.

Fiscal Policy: Mary T got clarification and answers to our questions about the new fiscal policy. Her email is attached at the very end of this report in case you missed it. There is still some confusion about the 3% that Extension takes and if they will take 10% of anything we raise. Mike C will get further clarification.

Christmas Trees in Spring Grove and Caledonia: We reviewed the decorating that was done for the Caledonia and SG trees and looked at the completed pictures. The SG Tree sold for \$100 and the proceeds go to the Houston County Care & Share.

Janene will check to see if the decorations on the Caledonia tree need to be removed. We discussed if we want to do this in other cities next year. Richard will put us on the list to decorate one of the Houston trees next year.

New Business:

Election of Officers: Our current Officers will serve one more year.

Houston Nature Center Project: (Kris/Doug): The Houston Nature Center is at the head of the Root River Bike Trail that runs between Houston and Preston (52 miles). It's an -excellent facility with interpretive materials, a gift shop, and a meeting room. The grounds have a wetland, a boardwalk, a natural playground, a picnic shelter, and a community garden with signage. An area immediately surrounding the building and an additional larger area along the trail have very nice native prairie plantings that are well-maintained with identifying labels for many of the native plants there. In the recent past, the HNC has had a Director, but funding for that position from the city is tight. So, currently, there is no Director, however the the last Director had started a woodland wildflower and shrub planting. She had mapped the area, developing a plan with a list of 22 wildflowers and 12 shrubs/trees with their possible locations. The map indicated an 80' x 8' area.

Kris Litscher-Lee's husband, Brian, is Chair of the Board of the Friends of the Houston Nature Center. They would like to complete the planting and are asking our help with the following:

- 1) Identifying Plants & upgrading the mapping
- 2) Educational Assistance for HNC volunteers and the public
- 3) Development of Signages
- 4) Review of the selection of plants & site development

They would like us to teach the maintenance volunteers and provide ongoing education for residents and visitors. Contact has been made with Prairie Moon Nursery and many of the listed plants are available through them. There are trees on the property (Black Walnut and Hackberry), and the adjacent, large recycling center building provides considerable shade. Janene asked if we could donate plants and was told yes, we can. We will check to see if we can put an MG sign up. We can do an inventory in the Spring. Deb, Linda, Sue, Mary and Doug all volunteered to help, in addition to Kris. Doug will send the map and lists of plants to these volunteers.

On motion, we voted to take on the project for next year.

Other Projects for 2021: (in addition to the Houston Nature Center)

Fall Workshop Event (It was suggested that we include a workshop on how to decorate with natural materials, making bird feeders, squash tasting, squash soup, etc.). Mary said we should lock in a date and location within the next couple of months. Mike said that Stearns County is doing their Spring Workshop on Facebook Live but we all agreed that we prefer the Fall for our event. It was suggested that maybe we can have it at the Houston Nature Center.

Finish Heritage House

Plant Exchange (Janene suggested the 2nd week in September)

Vegetable and Flower of the Year: We decided on Nasturtiums and Winter Squash for our flower and vegetable of the year. Janene sent a note saying that Nasturtiums and squash go hand in hand because aphids go to the nasturtiums and leave the squash alone. Ideas for future Flower of the Year include Calendula and Zinnias.

Bev mentioned that she has read that there will be a seed shortage in 2021 so order early!

New Business:

Next Meeting: February 16 at 5:30 PM via Zoom – there will be no January Meeting.

Round Table Discussion: We went around the “zoom grid” and talked about our gardening projects and wished each other a Merry Christmas.

Motion to adjourn was passed. Meeting was adjourned at 7:30 PM. 1 hour of Education time and 1 hours of Volunteer time will be given for attendance at this meeting.

Nora Beckjord

This is the email Mary T distributed about the new fiscal policy:

Here are the answers to your questions.

1. One was concerning any interest that would be earned on the money. Is that something that happens or not.

Answer:

The general EFS account does not earn interest.

Foundation accounts do earn interest (and allow groups to process tax deductible gifts and donations):

- **UMF Demand funds:** Demand funds are established with gift monies designated for current program support. All funds are available “upon demand” and with 100% liquidity. The funds are pooled for investment purposes with other accounts intended for current use, and generally cannot be exposed to significant market risk. Therefore, they are invested in short-term fixed income securities. Demand funds receive distributions of interest based upon the short-term rates set by the UMFIA. **Demand funds earn the least amount of interest of all funds.** This type of fund will likely be the one used most by Master Gardener groups. An administrative fee is assessed at 3% of new cash received by the U of M Foundation.

- **UMF Quasi-endowment funds:** Quasi-endowment funds are similar to permanent endowment funds in that expanding the principal amount is a long-term goal; however, in addition to expending income, principal may be invaded and expended for the funds' intended purpose. The initial fund balance must meet the minimum guideline for establishing a quasi-endowment (currently \$10,000). Funds are invested in the long-term pool. Annual UMF administrative fee is 1.5% of the fund's market value. **Earnings vary with the market, but average approximately 4% to 5% per year.**
- **UMF Endowment funds:** Endowment funds are established when gift monies are intended to exist in perpetuity and the endowment income is intended to support ongoing programs. The principal of the endowment cannot be spent. The minimum fund balance for establishing a permanent endowment is \$25,000. Funds are invested in the long-term pool. If available funds are not spent, reinvestment of available funds to principal is permitted on an annual basis. Annual UMF administrative fee is 1% of the fund's market value. **Earnings vary with the market, but average approximately 4-5% per year.**

2. The other is that we sometimes take advantage of Thrivent grants (generally \$250). Is there any policy for us doing that? And using that money?

Answer: Funds from grants can be deposited in the county's general University EFS account. You can use these funds as you like from the University standpoint -- the grant, however, may have specifications that your group needs to follow.

If the grant is significant and intricate, you have the option to open a sub-EFS account string just for the grant. That way it is easy to track your grant expenses. With the separate account string, we can run a report detailing purchases for the grant. Note: If the grant involves federal or state funding, it would need to run through the University. Simple, local grants (county, local retailer, etc.) do not need to run through the U.

Let me know if you need anything else!

Best,

Diane