

**Master Gardener Association of Bergen County
Board Meeting Minutes – March 21, 2023**

Present: Hosting – Melody Corcoran, Arnie Friedman, Karen Riede, Pat Vellas, Janet Schulz, Theresa Schneider, Miriam Taub, Herb Arbeiter, Elizabeth Gil, Joseph Cooper, Donna Faustini, Keith Mazanec

Absent: Suzanne Danzig, Martha Carlucci

The meeting was called to order by President Corcoran at 5:35 PM

Officer Reports:

President – Melody Corcoran

I made a request to the Parks Dept. to waive the fee for the use of a Pavilion I in Van Saun for June 13. It is a reasonable request considering all the work the Master Gardeners do in the county parks. The parks director, Jim Koth, contacted Joel Flagler about the request. Joel thought that what I was asking was “fair and reasonable, too. I am a huge cheerleader for the MGs and the work they do for county parks, etc.” Joel had “an in-depth meeting with Parks Director Jim Koth ... He very much appreciates all the work the MGs do in county parks. I believe you will be pleased with his response to your request.”

I have not gotten an official response yet, but judging by Joel’s email to me our request has been granted.

Vice President – Elizabeth Gil

No report.

Treasurer – Pat Vellas

For month ending Feb. 28, 2023:

Opening Balance as of: Jan. 31, 2023	\$	15,987.56
Income: Membership fees	\$	300.00
Member donation	\$	50.00
Speaker donation	\$	200.00

Total Income:	\$	550.00
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Treasurer’s Report cont...

Expenses:	John Beirne–Speaker’s Fee	\$	(200.00)
	NJ State Filing Fee	\$	(30.50)
	Patricia Vellas–Check Reorder	\$	(30.86)
	Joseph Cooper–Computer cables	\$	(65.01)

Total Expenses:		\$	(376.37)
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Closing Balance as of Jan. 31, 2023 \$ 16, 161.19

Total Outstanding Checks: John Beirne-Speaker’s Fee \$ (200.00)
 Joseph Cooper-Computer cables\$ (65.01)

Bank Statement Balance as of Jan. 31, 2023		\$	16,476.20
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Pat mentioned that she received a letter from the Center for Food Action promoting their 5k run.

***Motion:** Joseph motioned to approve the Treasurer’s Report and Arnie seconded the motion. All in attendance voted “Yes.” - APPROVED.

***Motion:** Arnie motioned to donate \$250.00 to the Center for Food Action. Liz seconded the motion. All in attendance voted “Yes” – APPROVED.

Recording Secretary – Keith Mazanec

Keith stated that the final copy of the Feb. 21, 2023 Board Meeting minutes had been sent out to all Board Members for review, and that if there were no changes or questions, proposed that a motion be made to approve them.

***Motion:** Arnie motioned to approve the February 2023 meeting minutes; Joseph seconded the motion. All in attendance voted “Yes.” APPROVED.

Corresponding Secretary – Miriam Taub

Miriam reported two editions of the Potting Shed were sent out in March. Also, a reminder of tonight’s meeting was sent out as well.

Old Business:

4-H and MG of BC collaboration - update

Karen read an email from Abbie Kesely, Sr. Program Coordinator 4H Youth Development, saying that they will be having a meeting with those who expressed interest within the next several weeks.

Summer Picnic – Van Saun Park

Picnic fare will consist of salads, sandwiches, etc. We should start promoting the event early and include an RSVP in order to gauge attendance.

Outreach Volunteer hours

Arnie will follow up with Joel whether Master Gardeners can schedule and designate as volunteer hours various single work events at non-MG volunteer sites.

Karen read dates for upcoming MG outreach events:

- * Saturday, April 22, Party for the Planet at Van Saun County Park
- * Sunday, April 23, Daffodil Day in Ridgewood
- * Saturday, May 20, Ridgefield Park Earth Day
- * Sunday, May 21, EarthFest Overpeck at Overpeck County Park

Computer, equipment mgr., Zoom meetings

We should seek out an equipment manager; someone who has knowledge and experience with software and computer skills. Regarding Zoom meetings, Martha and Arnie have spoken about ways to do this. They are planning to meet and test run how to best do this.

Ad hoc volunteer hours and MG categories committee

Melody read Suzanne's volunteer records report, which included Suzanne's notes from the Ad Hoc committee:

We had our first Ad Hoc committee meeting to discuss our membership and how we begin to enforce both the Continuing Ed and Volunteer hours required for the maintenance of their MG certification. Between Karen R and me we will begin to cull down the "accepted" list by making calls and sending out emails to those members who have not entered hours on Better Impact to confirm their interest in the organization and volunteering going forward. To date we have "archived" an additional 22 members, who have either moved, have health issues, are taking care of family members or who are just no longer able to volunteer. That brings our "accepted" or active members to a total of 99, 64 "in process" and a total of 289 have been "archived." These are members who have moved, are no longer recording hours or are deceased. It was also determined that we need to provide additional tutorials on the use of Better Impact, since there are still too many either not comfortable using it or not acknowledging the importance of this system as our new method of recording hours.

We want to continue to inform our MGs as to their value and the value of our organization. The committee will meet monthly and will continue to keep you posted. If anyone has suggestions please let me know, always happy to listen to constructive ideas.

Karen mentioned that she would prefer to do one-on-one training on Better Impact in the office. Please let her know if there is anyone who would be interested in individualized training.

Committee Reports

Community outreach liaison – Arnie Friedman

Arnie reported that Wiebke Hinsch has been removed from the Speakers Bureau. We continue to do talks in the area and get requests to speak at events

Hospitality – Martha Carlucci (absent)

No report

Membership – Theresa Schneider

To date we have 114 dues-paying members for calendar year 2023. Theresa has sent emails to all non-paying members from each class, which included a list of the benefits their dues provides. Responses have started to come back. Some members have moved out of state, some are lifetime members and some just forgot to send in their dues payments.

Newsletter – Miriam Taub

Miriam reported that people are not responding to requests for information. Please let her know if you have any ideas on how to get people to respond.

Programs – Donna Faustini

Our speaker tonight is Kathy Sauerborn who will be discussing gardening for hummingbirds. The April 18 meeting will be a joint session with Passaic County, and Mary Jasch will speak on private gardens. Michael Hagen from the NYBG will speak at our May 16 meeting, and his topic will be rock gardens.

Donna announced that the dates for the fall meetings are as follows:

Sept. 19, Oct. 17 and Nov. 14.

Melody reported that as of now there has been no response from anyone interested in taking over as the new Programs Chairperson. We will make an announcement at tonight's meeting.

Trips and Tours – Janet Schulz

Janet reported that she has been in touch with other garden clubs regarding plant sales. She will be meeting with members from other clubs to discuss speakers at their meetings.

Janet announced the first tour will be at the Leonard J. Buck Garden on May 11. The cost is \$90.00 for the docent, and we will need at least 10 participants. The tour is limited to 15 participants.

Rutgers Cooperation Extension liaison – Karen Riede

Karen distributed copies of Policies and Procedures for the RCE Master Gardener Program along with the RCE Master Gardener Volunteer Agreement.

RCE Report to the MG Assoc. Board Mtg. 3/21/23

Joel Flagler

As announced recently, Rutgers University will be hiring a Statewide MG Coordinator who will also oversee other elements of Consumer Horticulture.

This new faculty position will be filled according to the slow but steady search and hire process. One of the priorities will be to standardize the MG training and management of volunteer activities. That will help solidify the foundation upon which the program can grow and evolve throughout NJ.

Bergen County does need to do some catching up in terms of volunteer agreements. Most of the counties with newer MG programs have volunteer agreements on file for all their graduates/active volunteers. Bergen started training in 1984 and the volunteer agreement was not even created until around 2002. As a result, there are many Bergen MGs out there for whom we do not have a volunteer agreement on file. It is required that these documents be kept in the Extension office and we are now initiating a new push to get up to date.

Effective immediately (3/20/23—vernal equinox) all MGs must have a signed volunteer agreement on file. We have classes of 2016-2023 covered and those agreements are in the office, but none from before 2016.

So, we remind all MGs that it is a requirement to have this document on file and if you want to continue working as a Rutgers MG you must take care of this, please. Karen and I will figure out how to best facilitate this process. Miriam has agreed to carry the message in the Potting Shed, and Melody has been made aware of this emerging priority as well.

In a recent meeting (3/17/23) with Director of Parks, Jim Koth, it was made clear that Bergen County will now require of us that all MGs working on County properties must be certified and must have a signed Rutgers Volunteer Agreement on file in the Extension office. There will be no exceptions. The Volunteer Agreement protects our volunteers while also making it clear what they can expect from the program and what is expected of them. The document also protects the University and, by the relationship between Rutgers and Bergen, it protects the County as well.

Thank you for your cooperation and helping us get this task done.

Joel

There was a discussion about the RCE Agreement; who is certified and who may be just volunteering from the public. It will be rolled out via the newsletter and website.

RMGANJ report – Herb Arbeiter

Master Gardener Coordinator, Nick Polanin:

Rutgers is searching for a statewide Department of Agriculture and Natural Resources Coordinator for the Master Gardener program.

The University president has asked all departments to plan for a 9.5% budget cut.

Covid brought us into the digital age but now we must find a way to reconnect.

Rutgers is now using the MS Teams format for data. SIKI is history.

Nick Hendershot:

Planning for the Fall Conference. Tentative date is Oct. 21. They are looking into the Douglass Student Center as a venue.

The topic will be: “Transforming Your Home, Inside and Out.”

Herb mentioned that during his presentation to the new class this morning, he said they should attend the monthly MG of BC meetings in Hackensack.

Melody inquired if there was any mention at the meeting of the “Award for Excellence.” Herb said it was not discussed.

Site coordinator liaison – Liz Gil

Liz reported that the clean-up event at the Mary S. Topolsky Garden went very well. We bundled 48 bags of debris. An additional clean-up event at the Topolsky Garden has been scheduled for April 1. Most volunteer sites will be opening in April.

Volunteer Records – Suzanne Danzig (absent)

The Volunteer Records report was read by Melody as part of the ad hoc committee report (see under “Old Business”)

Year date a total of 48 MGs recorded hours, up from 41 last month. Several of these new entries are for CE hours, not Outreach hours. Year to date we have recorded a total of 429 Outreach hours, up 250 hours from last month. Administrative hours are at 242 for the year, up 129 from last month. There is a total of 5 teaching hours so far this year. Continuing Ed hours, including our MG of BC monthly meetings, are at 265 hours, up 141 hours from last month. Some of our members are recording many more CE hours than volunteer hours. I suppose we will have to remind our members that CE hours do not go toward their Volunteer requirements.

Website – Joseph Cooper

Nothing to report. Joseph brought in several back-up cables should presenters need them.

New Business

Breakfast w/Board for new class - A breakfast with the MG of BC Board with the new class of MG's has been scheduled for Tuesday, May 16 from 9:30 – 12:30.

Goals for 2023: will discuss at April's meeting.

T shirts, logo, vendors: Karen showed off a t-shirt with logo. She expressed concern with the sizing of the product, and questioned if we should seek out a new vendor. After some discussion, it was decided to research our options and use a different supplier. Arnie will look into this.

Adjournment

***Motion:** A motion was made by Joseph to adjourn the meeting. Arnie seconded the motion.

Meeting adjourned at 6:57 PM.