

Environmental Education Commission
Meeting Minutes
November 12, 2013
Louisiana Department of Wildlife & Fisheries
Baton Rouge Office, Louisiana Room
1 PM

I. Call to Order:

Commission Chair Gary Balsamo called the meeting to order at 1:06 pm.

II. Roll Call/ Sign in:

Members Present: Judy Miranti, Nancy Rabalais, Ann Wilson, Linda Brown for Alex Appeaning, Gary Balsamo, Kelly Templet, Angela Capello, Jonathan Dearbone, Brenda Walkenhorst, Deepak Bhatnagar, Dean Blackett, Dinah Maygarden, Cole Ruckstuhl, Heather Egger, Brenda Nixon, Mindy Brooks.

Others Present: Angie Fogleman, Acadiana RC&D, Jessica D. Dixon, LA OSP.

III. Welcome new members:

Mindy Brooks and Judy Miranti

IV. Acceptance of Minutes from Last Meeting:

Brenda Nixon moved to accept the minutes from EEC meeting on August 20, 2013. Ann seconded. Minutes were accepted.

V. Financial Report:

LEEC Coordinator Venise Ortego provided details of current budget. Venise will request that Prestige Plates balance be reflected in spreadsheet; \$40K currently available in grants.

Expenditures were minimal. Venise attended the NAAEE conference and purchased a printer.

VI. Coordinator's Report:

Venise commented that most of the information will be reported later in the meeting.

Thomas Gresham, LEEC Assistant Coordinator was introduced. He was previously the Information Director with LDWF, and after leaving, has now returned to work with Venise and LEEC. He has ordered promotional items, activity books and water bottles.

He and Carrie Salyers participated in the Keep Louisiana Beautiful conference, National Hunting and Fishing Day and exhibited at Louisiana Science Teachers Association.

Venise attended NAAEE, serving on a panel on EPA sub-grants. One purpose of this activity was to encourage EPA personnel to attend, but it occurred during the government shutdown. The goal is to produce a cumulative report to show the national importance of the EPA EE grants; and to communicate mutual strengthening.

VII. Old Business

A. 2014 Symposium Committee Reports

1. **Audio Visual:** Dinah reported that it was too early for progress on AV.
2. **Door Prize/Hospitality:** Venise (in place of Connie) reported that some donations had been made.
3. **Evaluation:** Heather Egger reported that she and Cole had discussed using the same format as last year.
4. **Exhibitors:** Angela Capello reported that she has made initial contacts and will start organizing now that LSTA is over.
5. **Finance:** Gary Balsamo reported that \$5K will be in place soon and Deepak B donated \$100. No funds have been spent yet.
6. **Keynote Speaker:** Recommendations were made by Brenda Walkenhorst and Dean Blackett for Kevin Baer, a toxicologist who has done a lot of watershed outreach work, to deliver the keynote address.
7. **Programs:** Brenda Nixon reported that the short course workshops have been finalized and flyer has been prepared, listing the short courses.
The session proposal form is on the website but no proposals have been received yet. Grant recipients are encouraged to present, and teachers who are participating in Quantifying Debris project (Diedre Young in Arkansas wants to submit a proposal.)
Venise will be seeking proposals.
Brenda Nixon cautioned that LSTA attendance was very light (400) due to teachers not being able to be out of the classroom (especially elementary teachers).
8. **Promotion:** Venise reported that all the printed materials had been put into packets and packets will be sent to principals in Shreveport area.
9. **Registration:** Brenda Walkenhorst said that there was little to report as most registration takes place on site. Brenda had questions about the methods of registration. Because LDWF cannot accept credit cards, that method cannot be used for payment. Thomas said he can develop an online application form. There was consensus that finding an online registration method would reap benefits.
Discussion about encouraging attendance by offering a two for one deal and the criteria. Jonathan felt that there should be an open 2 for 1 deal first year and add criteria later if needed.
People in Shreveport area who can assist with recruitment and sponsorship: Jan Graff, Karen Merritt, and Amy Ouchley.
10. **Short Courses:** Venise reported that state vans would be used to transport participants to short course venues. Drivers need to be state certified – state employees. Some people may have time conflicts. Registration begins at 5 pm.

B. Environmental Literacy Plan: Nancy Rabalais commented that the draft looks good and we are waiting for a letter from Secretary Barham, who is willing to do so, and then the Governor's signature.

C. Art & Language Arts Contest updates: Thomas Gresham reported that the Art and Language Art 2014 calendar is out and commission members received copies in their packets. The form for the 2014/15 contest is now available and the due date is April 25.

Deepak commented that there is an issue with age group designation and we need certification from the principals.

D. 2013 Grants Committee update: Brenda Nixon reported that a list of grant recipients is available in the report. One recipient could not be funded because they failed to turn in paperwork.

VIII. New Business

A. Playmakers Proposal

Discussion about sponsorship with LEEC funds of Playmakers to perform at EE symposium and to pay for travel to schools – with a play with Watershed theme.

Thomas showed a short promo video and it was agreed that this is a valuable way to introduce the watershed concept to elementary schools. Also most agreed that this should be primarily benefitting low income schools and to allow travel to 4 quadrants of state.

Brenda made a motion (Mindy seconded) to provide \$10K and ask them to leverage these funds; ensuing discussion killed the motion as others wanted more specific limits due to concerns that \$10K was too generous and/or could be put to other uses.

Venise suggested that a contract should be created to be billed in increments with a limit of \$10K to be spent by June 30 (end of fiscal year). Ann said that she would not vote for \$10K being the amount set aside from grant budget, but would vote on a lesser amount of not more than \$5000 to come from this budget.

The grants committee can write criteria for “low income schools”.

Jonathan made a motion that there should be 20 performances paying up to \$500 per school (\$10,000 total) in 4 quadrants of the state at schools showing high percentage of free and reduced lunch.

Judy seconded motion.

This was voted and passed.

Venise will follow up by writing a draft contract and circulating for comment.

B. LEEC Election of Officers

Secretary: Nominating committee nominated Dinah. No other nominations – Vote took place and Dinah Maygarden was elected secretary.

Chair Elect: There were no nominations for chair elect, so floor was opened for nominations. Gary nominated Deepak, but Deepak declined due to conflicts with his employment at USDA.

Angela nominated Cole. Cole accepted the nomination.

Gary made a motion that there should be only one nominee for each open office; this was seconded. A vote was taken, and passed.

Cole Ruckstuhl was elected Chair Elect.

IX. Announcements

X. Next Meeting Dates:

February 21, 2014 (at Symposium in Shreveport), May 13, 2014, August 12, 2014

XI. Adjournment

Gary Balsamo adjourned the meeting at 2:49 pm.