

**Minutes of the Annual Meeting
of the Berkeley Jefferson Extension Master Gardener Association
October 21, 2015
Hospice of the Panhandle**

Prior to the meeting members enjoyed a pot luck dinner beginning at 6pm.

At 7pm President Cathy Sigalas convened the business meeting. She welcomed everyone and commented on the good year we had had, noting the successful Gardening 101, Plant Sale and Tomato Fest events, a full CE calendar of events that had been enjoyed by many members, and the continuing work of the Speakers Bureau. Next were introductions of the Board members and new students from the class of 2015. Following this, the class of 2014 received their EMG badges and certificates. Our new Extension Master Gardeners are: Allison Adams, Marellen Aherne, Karen Ash, Ron Emge, Patrice Herrera, Jenny Hughes, Linda Mussleman, Sara Tamplin, Pat Tatem and Tom Van Dyke. (Karen Ash and Patrice Herrera were not in attendance). A photo of the group was taken.

Sharon Bias gave the financial report for 2015. Overall, she said we are doing well and have more than \$7,000.00 dollars in our account. She briefly reviewed the financial results for each of the main events for the year. She noted that we will again host an Appreciation Luncheon for members, but that we may want to look at different ways to offer fun, appreciative events for members in the future. Copies of the 2015 financial results were provided, and had been emailed to members the week before (copy attached).

Sharon Bias also reported that we had just gotten the news that our tax exempt status had been confirmed, after a long effort to clarify this matter with the IRS. This status now allows the organization to apply for grants, accept donations and more.

Each member was given a draft BJEMGA calendar for the coming year. This includes several events which can be used for volunteer and continuing education hours. Cathy clarified that the list was not intended to limit ways in which members can obtain CE credits, or earn volunteer hours, and that ideas from members for new activities and new teaching opportunities, and new CE offerings, are welcome.

Cathy informed members that Jenny Hughes had agreed to serve on the Board to help with Publicity for the organization. Jenny had done a great job helping with publicity for the Tomato Fest, and her talents will be welcome on the board. Cathy also said that the Board had been looking for someone to handle “communications”, formerly the newsletter position on the board, for about a year with no response. As a result, two Board members decided to switch responsibilities: Sharon Bias will take on responsibilities for Communications, including monitoring our Facebook page and email communications, and Sharon Coombes will take over the Treasurer responsibilities.

Cathy next focused on the results of the recent survey. The response rate was very good, with approximately one third of members sending replies. The responses were thoughtful and generally positive. In reviewing the responses, the Board felt there were several themes. It was clear that the group agreed that our mission and focus is educating the public about gardening related matters. Members felt a need to improve and expand our educational effort, both for our members and the public. Cathy noted that the Speakers Bureau is a key part of improving and expanding our educational offerings. Children's activities were also a big area of interest for members. And there was interest in the idea of demonstration gardens, and teaching in a garden environment.

With these themes in mind, the Board plans to take the following actions. With respect to children's activities, Allison Adams has agreed to join the Board to focus on and coordinate that area. With respect to "upping" our game in education of ourselves and the public, and considering the importance of our Speakers Bureau in that effort, Linda Musselman has agreed to join the Board to cover that area, especially since she recently became Co-Chair of the Speakers Bureau with Louise Finch.

Most members responded that they felt the Plant Sale, Tomato Fest, and Gardening 101 were successful and worth continuing. However, at this point no one has volunteered to Chair/organize Gardening 101 in 2016. As a new approach, the Board is considering turning the plant sale into a garden fest which will include educational booths and presentations on gardening as well as vendors, children's activities and refreshments. We hope to have the plant sale/garden fest at War Memorial Park. The tentative date for the GardenFest is April 30.

With respect to demonstration gardens, Cathy noted that there are three gardens already existing that could most likely be used by EMGs for teaching. Our members have already been invited to participate at the Ranson Old Town Community garden – an ideal teaching venue – but member response has been spotty at best. We may also be able to teach at the Promise Garden in Martinsburg. And we also have the Judicial Rain Garden as a potential teaching venue. She pointed out, however, that these gardens can require a great deal of maintenance, and member support of that maintenance is difficult to generate.

Several members offered additional ideas including having an EMG presence at farmer's markets, undertaking local beautification projects, and becoming known as a group selling native plants. We discussed the fact that these ideas -- and many other good ideas from our members -- will only come to fruition if members step up and volunteer to coordinate them.

Cathy thanked members for coming and the meeting ended about 8:15 pm.