

April 4, 2022 Virtual Board Meeting via Zoom 1:00-3:00 pm EST

Attending: Robin Hanes, Barbara White, JoAnn Dalley, Michelle Cormier, Alison Brill, Tim Maywalt, Mary Spear, Penny Kaiserlian, Kathy Nepote, Libby Gretz, Anne Benham, Martha Orton

Secretary: Alison Brill

The motion was made, seconded, and passed to adopt the minutes of the March 2022 Board meeting as submitted.

Librarian's Report: Anne Benham

Anne is concerned about the rare usage of the CATS library. She offered three ideas about how to increase circulation:

- An email newsletter about the library and its contents
- A user survey
- Moving the library back to the geology room at DOF where it used to be

Robin thanked Anne for bringing this to the attention of the Board. Following Anne's presentation, the Board and Anne considered and discussed Anne's ideas, as well as others, at some length. Additional ideas included:

- Short book reviews at the membership meetings
- Putting information and news about the library in Libby's membership blast
- Having Anne be at the library periodically
- Applying for another mini-grant to update the library's holdings
- A CATS book club like the one the Master Naturalists have
- A major clean-up and organization of the space to make it more hospitable
- Bringing books to the membership meetings when in-person meetings return (Martha used to do this)

There also seems to be a problem with five books that have gone missing.

It is unclear whether DOF would allow CATS to move its holdings back in the geology room. And, whether they would allow a locked cabinet there.

Anne will follow up at DOF about moving the library into the geology room.

President's Report: Robin Hanes

Robin wrote and distributed a summary of CATS activity in 2021 and thanked all who assisted with this project. She is awaiting input from Rob before finalizing.

This report will be posted on the website for the membership to read.

Tree sale preparations continue. Robin has her fingers crossed that the weather will encourage the trees to leaf out so they look a little more appealing.

Arbor Day planning is ongoing. Robin and Penny are preparing an ad for C'ville Weekly.

Trainees have requested wooden name tags and do not want to wait until December to receive them. Barbara felt that a good percentage of the trainees should have their requisite volunteer hours completed so that she only has to order the name tags once a year. There was a discussion of the cost and whether the name tags could be distributed bi-annually. Kathy pointed out that CATS's policy is that trainees get a hat after completing 25 hours of volunteer service, but not a wooden name tag. The reasoning behind this policy comes from the ongoing trend showing that volunteers are gung-ho their first year but tend not to volunteer thereafter. Robin could respond to the trainees that wooden name tags are for volunteers who have shown a significant commitment. Martha noted that Arlington/Alexandria CATS has a similar policy.

After some discussion, the Board decided to pay for replacement wooden name tags for those who've lost theirs. There are very few of these people.

The Board discussed the merits of lanyards versus magnets and decided in favor of magnets for the name tags.

The Historic Garden Week property that CATS was scheduled to help with has been withdrawn from the event by its owners. Robin thanked Tim, Mary, and Kathy for everything they did before this change.

Robin attended the meeting with Roxanne and Peggy where Kendra and Toine reported on the 10th and Page project. Kendra and Toine did a great job representing everything they have been doing.

The Tree Commission is very firm about what they want to do in this neighborhood, though CATS suggested they check out other neighborhoods given how CATS has spent a long time pursuing this project and is making good progress now. Although the Tree Commission seems to understand this, they are focused on their plan to get City of Promise teens going door-to-door asking people if they want trees.

Robin reported that the meeting was difficult. Roxanne and Peggy said the door-to-door campaign is key to Releaf and they plan to proceed. Kendra asked that the door-to-door work does not happen where we have already been planting and getting to know neighbors. Kendra and Toine suggested an area for the door knocking work, hoping they will all be in better communication about locations and how things are going. A lot is up in the air; Robin hopes to go to the next meeting.

Kathy had received the summary of the meeting sent by Roxanne. Releaf plans to go to other neighborhoods eventually, but not until they fully explore 10th and Page, where the door-to-door work will happen during the summer. The City of Promise people have asked CATS to participate in the tree information portion of their project. Robin alerted them that CATS will have its own tree planting events next fall, so she could not predict whether CATS would be able to assist them at that time.

Robin requested that Kathy attend these meetings, which she agreed to do barring any conflicts.

Robin had a conversation with Jake Van Yahres about whether he would meet CATS members at the Earlysville Oak on the day of the CATS picnic to talk about the tree since his company has been taking care of it for so long. He agreed, so Robin plans to ask him if he will contact the folks at the airport about CATS gathering there. This would not be for the entire day. Perhaps the remainder of the picnic could be at the nearby winery . . . or? Robin asked for help investigating possibilities.

Past President's Report: Barbara White

Barbara did not have a report. She noted that she will be gone 4/14/22-5/1/22 and 5/24/22-6/7/22.

President Elect's Report: JoAnn Dalley

JoAnn is also going to be out of town 4/14/22-4/24/22.

Treasurer's Report: Michelle Cormier

Michelle sent out the financial report via email. At this time, CATS has:

\$9,428 in checking (minus the card balance of \$1,330) and
25,134 in the money market account

The tax documents have gone to the accountant. He reports to the IRS in June.

Michelle also sent out the finalized 2022 budget amended with the \$500 contribution to Ivy Creek.

Tree sale expenses so far are \$847 for trees and \$142 for coffee.

\$250 has been spent on advertising.

Michelle is holding the bill for water at the nursery while Robin attempts to negotiate it down.

Michelle pulled together a summary of the technology subscriptions. She asked that users provide her with their login credentials to these accounts so that she can monitor when/if the accounts are paid. Otherwise, some of them auto-renew and she would not be aware of that.

Robin raised the issue of SurveyMonkey. A contact of hers suggested that CATS write a letter explaining CATS's status as a volunteer-only nonprofit that sought to use the paid program for only one month, which was supposed to be a free trial period. Mary has looked at the SurveyMonkey website and suggested that all important people at the company should receive the letter. The Board discussed what the contents of the CATS letter should be. After some discussion, it was decided that Tim and Mary will take the lead on drafting this letter to SurveyMonkey.

Robin expressed concern about the technology subscriptions continuing to increase in cost. The Board must remain vigilant about which ones CATS needs and uses. CATS can also check out free options, such as Google Forms. Robin also cautioned against signing up for temporary free subscriptions that might turn into a paid subscription without notice. JoAnn thought all subscriptions should be reviewed at a minimum once a year at budget time.

Michelle reported that CATS pays approximately \$1400 per year for tech subscriptions, but that every year is different since some subscriptions are for two years. She can provide year-to-date reports on subscriptions at any time.

Robin feels confident that the current subscriptions are certainly being used and are valid expenses. She would like any proposed changes to subscriptions communicated to the Board first.

Many of the subscriptions are used by more than one committee, making the responsibility for keeping track of them one for the whole organization.

Michelle reported that the dues button on the website is working well. So far, only one person who has used it declined to pay the 91-cent charge. Six more people have paid their dues using the button.

There was an event at Phil Stokes' place. Someone who had not registered showed up at his tree walk. The person was a donor. The Board discussed the pros and cons of letting donors attend membership events, and how to know who is one.

The Board had a long discussion about the logistics of this situation. There is a policy in place inviting donors to come to membership events, so the Board decided to table this issue until the next meeting while someone locates the policy with the actual language as it exists.

Projects Committee: Kathy Nepote

Last month was very busy, but only two things are on the calendar at this time for April because of the tree sale. The Projects Committee will meet on April 13; there will be more on TIF after that.

Communications Committee: Penny Kaiserlian

The focus this past month has been on promoting the Tree Sale scheduled for 4/9 and the Tree Basics classes and walks. This is the first time CATS has done a Tree Sale without other partners to help promote the event so CATS's own promotional efforts were very much needed. The effectiveness of the marketing will not be known until after the Sale.

These efforts included:

- * Mentioned in MailChimp mailings in late February and March with distribution of over 1100 names
- * On our website, Facebook, and Libby's blog
- * Featured in C'ville Weekly ad March 23
- * Sister organizations informed their members: Piedmont Master Gardeners, Rivanna Master Naturalists, Blue Ridge PRISM, Sierra Club, Bird Club
- * Bill Sublette's latest blog on the website

Next month the Committee will be promoting Arbor Day events. CATS will start promoting the Fall Training Class in May.

Libby reported on membership. CATS has 162 members, including the class of 2021. 128 have paid their membership dues. Many appreciate the new PayPal option. About three people per week are paying their current dues.

Libby attempts to contact members in a variety of ways when they fail to respond or pay their dues, but gives up after attempting to find people for two years. She double-checks TIF first to make sure the non-paying people are not volunteering.

Joe can send a list to Libby of everyone who is currently entering volunteer hours.

Sometimes members experience financial hardship but wish to remain members. The Board agreed that CATS should give such people a break and recognize their temporary inability to pay their dues for one year without removing them from the membership rolls.

There was a motion to put the donate button on every communication sent out. The motion was seconded and approved.

Education Committee: Tim Maywalt and Mary Spear

Tim stated that he and Mary have nothing new to report that was not announced at the last membership meeting.

Robin wants to stay informed about the new class on advocacy planned for the training class of 2022.

Continuing and Unfinished Business: Robin Hanes

Robin requested a discussion of Memorial Trees. The Board talked about which committee would be responsible for the project, whether it even should be a project, where the tree would be planted, what CATS would do as opposed to the donor when it comes to post-planting care, etc. There are a number of possible scenarios which raise various questions.

Tim advocated for CATS to come up with a regular response to people who reach out to CATS requesting help to plant a memorial tree.

The Board generally felt that planting memorial trees is a good idea when asked. CATS makes money from it, it results in good PR, and more trees get in the ground.

The Board agreed to explore different ideas about memorial tree programs on their own and present them to one another before discussing at next month's meeting.

Meeting adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,
Alison Brill