

BRGC April 23rd Zoom Board Meeting - 2025

Members Present: Marie Caracuzzo, Martha Anne Gilliam, Crystal Miller, Lise Jenkins, Marilyn Green, Evenlight Eagles, Lynda Steele, Malia Shorts, Susan Sweet, Ann Perley, Mona Johnson, Mary Horsman, Marita Higgins

President Marie Caracuzzo called the meeting to order at 10:14. There was a glitch in the zoom invitation link and several members had issues getting online, while some never could. Marie has solved the issue for her future invitations/links.

Secretary Report: Martha Anne Gilliam asked if there were any additions or corrections to the September 2024 minutes as broadcast. Marie asked for a motion to accept the minutes as written. Marita made the motion, and Ann seconded the motion. The September 2024 board meeting minutes were passed. There was no meeting in October, 2024 due to the devastation caused by Hurricane Helene.

Treasurer Report: Malia said it was \$50.00 to have our taxes filed for 2024. Malia had budgeted \$1,000.00 for the Memorial Garden this year. In addition, there were donations of \$500.00 from Ron Perry and \$237.00 from Kathy Connelly for a total budget of \$1,737.00 budgeted for the Memorial Garden in 2025. There was \$168.00 budgeted for our website, however, Lise Jenkins, our webmaster, said it is presently \$100.00, but she would like to wait to determine a final total as she is still examining capabilities and could potentially incur more cost. Malia said our current checkbook balance is \$27,059.95. Ed Rhule has donated \$10,000 to be set aside for the purchase of an additional statue. J. McLaughlin contributed \$2,039.00 from sales. There is \$2,646.95 in the account from Wildflower Bingo. While a statue has not been purchased, a potential amount of \$14,685 was mentioned for this expense. Joyce did not have the link for the zoom meeting and could not get on, but she had requested that we increase our donation to the Blowing Rock Appearance Advisory Committee, because they do so much. Their hanging baskets are beautiful. Joyce also requested an extra \$100 for the 4th of July parade to purchase

seed packets to hand-out to the people. Joyce also wanted a larger donation to Parks and Rec for our mulch. Lynda Steele asked that we donate to the Blue Ridge Chapter of the Native Plant Society for a deer fence they need to install. Marie said that Arborcrest had a lot of damage from Hurricane Helene. She proposed that we donate some money to them. Lynda Steele mentioned that last year's cider event had been cancelled after the hurricane, and there was an amount of \$250.00 leftover from that budget last year. She suggested that we could donate it to Arborcrest. Evenlight said that, if we did donate that, we should note that it is for Hurricane Helene damage. Evenlight had some questions and concerns regarding the amount budgeted for the Memorial Gardens this year. Evenlight thought that the amount from Wildflower Bingo allocated for the gardens was a greater amount. Malia explained that she had subtracted \$521.00 because that was the overage spent from last year's budgeted horticulture amount. There was some discussion about the statue. Evenlight asked if we could segue at this point to Horticulture.

Horticulture: Evenlight said that Ed Rhule has considered paying for the entire cost of the statue even after she had proposed a possible amount of \$17,000. She suggested that money from bingo that was budgeted toward the statue should go into the Memorial Garden horticulture expenses. Evenlight explained plans she had for improving the "side" garden. This is the garden that runs along the side of the 1888 Museum perpendicular to the south side of Memorial Garden. Ron Cutlip had worked with her and they wanted to make the side gardens a native plant area and potentially take it all the way to the parking area in the back. Marie suggested moving the J. McLaughlin money to horticulture. Evenlight mentioned that on several occasions, she has accepted donations from the public. She gave the example of a \$100.00 donation from a lady who asked for Astilbe from the gardens and Evenlight gave her some from her own garden. She asked that those types of donations go towards the horticulture budget. Marie made a motion to move the J. McLaughlin money to the horticulture budget. Ann Perley seconded the motion. Evenlight said, at this point, she doesn't need that much. She needs \$775.00 for flowers, \$300.00 for mulch. She had anticipated a total of \$1,775 rather than the budgeted amount.

She mentioned several items she wants to purchase, such as better, easier to use, safer hoses such as retractable, housed hoses, landscaping rocks, and stakes for plant identification. At this point, we moved to the President's report and decided to continue the horticulture discussion later.

President Report: Marie announced that member Pat Collins has agreed to install the 2025 officers at the May meeting. This would normally have been done at our October meeting last year, but it was cancelled after the devastation brought by Hurricane Helene. Marie also said she needs a Bingo chair this year. She noted that everything had already been done. Everything was ready to go for bingo last year when Helene rolled in and the decision was made to postpone. Marie also expressed thanks that Mary Babbitt had gotten our first 501-C taxes filed. Mary Babbitt will be recognized for her service as president to our club.

Vice President Report: New member and our new vice-president, Crystal Miller could not get on the zoom link and joined us via her phone. She has agreed to sell our tee-shirts and other garden club accessories. She will not be at the May meeting, but will be here in June.

Membership Chair: Kathy Medosch was unavailable, and the co-chair, Ann Perley had lost her connection to the meeting.

Hospitality Chair: Mary Horsman asked if anyone could bring snacks to the May 7th meeting. Marita offered to bring a veggie tray and said that Dena Lutz will be bringing something. Susan Sweet volunteered to bring cookies and decorate the tables. Lise volunteered to bring a dessert. Marie offered to bring a raffle item. Lise also offered to bring a coffee-table style garden book. She said she could bring a different book for the raffle each month. Susan Sweet said she could bring one of the club's herb recipe books for the raffle. Any board members/chair people are encouraged to come help set up as early as 10:30 a.m. on May 7th.

Field Trip Chair: Mona said that she and Melaine have planned many outings for the year. The first field trip is May 3rd in Lenoir. It will be the

77th year celebration for Hibriten Garden Club there. There will be tours of several gardens. At the time, she said 10 people had signed up. The plan is to meet at 9 at the American Legion Building/Parking Lot. After a walking tour of six gardens, the group will have lunch in Hudson.

On May 7th, Dena Lutz will make the announcement about the trip planned to Hendersonville.

Also, the Lavender Farm in Lansing is going to let us come for a field trip. Mona has been unable to get in touch with the blueberry farm there. The local visit to Arborcrest, which was planned for October, has significantly increased their price/suggested donation per person.

Newsletter: Lynda Steele will send the first newsletter out towards the end of May. She will include some retrospective writing about the sad, devastating time during Helene and the aftermath. Lynda asks that we send her any pictures from the May meeting.

Facebook: Marilyn said that she will post some information after the Mile of Flowers meeting on Friday. She is looking for contact information on Trish Johnson, a lady who had asked about joining. Lise said she would try to get some information so that we could reach out.

Website: Lise reminded us about the “members only” section and said our password is “GardenFun”. Lise asks that we send her any pictures to replace the A.I. generated ones she has used. She also mentioned that we have more capabilities. Presently, there is a button people can use to print applications. Marie brought up a question regarding whom we should promote on our website and cautioned about promoting non-garden related businesses, and organizations or businesses that are not club-related, or do not directly benefit the club. Lise said there is a link to the Lenoir garden club registration because our first field trip is their event. There is a link to BRAHM. These links were deemed totally acceptable. Evenlight said we should also include a list of all our donors to Wildflower Bingo on the site and any other large donations to the club. Mona suggested that we should write a policy for clarity in how we use the newsletter and email, as well. Martha Anne mentioned that she had been told (by a previous board

member) that there was a previous decision made by the board that emails were not to be used for non garden club related information. Lise Jenkins offered to write a draft of the policy and send it out to board members for approval/discussion.

Mile of Flowers: Susan said that she has a committee meeting this week. She says there are already over 56 reservations made to attend MOF, which will take place, rain or shine. There are 40 people registered to come from the Gastonia Master Gardeners. She said that we will actually be making some money for the club, and it will all go towards the horticulture budget. This will be a walking tour. All of the gardens will be in the area of homes from 221 to Wallingford. She will have a sign-up sheet at the May meeting. She will also offer a presentation regarding MOF at the May meeting. She said that insurance costs less this year than in the past, and there will be no expense for a trolley, as it is a walking tour. MOF will be the last Friday in June which is the 27th. She also has fliers to hand out.

Special Programs: Elmyra Morris was unable to use the zoom link, however she is working on our September BRAHM meeting which is about the gardens at Reynolda in Winston Salem. She hopes to get us a private tour of the gardens there as a field trip.

Programs: Marita said that Paige Patterson, Extension Agent, from Watauga County, will speak to us on May 7th on landscaping for privacy. On June 4th, Cantey Tanner, the sculptor who created “Jessie”, the statue of the little girl reading on the bench in front of the BR Library, will talk about art in the garden.

On July 9th, member Pat Wheeler will speak on tablescares and more. She will need an easel. Mona said she has one.

On August 6th, Chris Conner from Whole Hive Honey will talk about bees. He will bring some of his products for purchase.

Marita asked about the budget for gifts for speakers. Malia said that \$400.00 is budgeted for speakers/gifts. Susan Sweet said she has enough of our cookbooks that she could offer those to our speakers.

Past President Thoughts: Mary Babbitt was not present, however, Marie cautioned that the July 4th parade will come up quickly and there would be a sign-up sheet at the May meeting. We will meet again this year at Joyce's barn to create a float. We hope to give out seed packets to folks watching the parade.

Budget Questions: Susan Sweet asked if we had decided/voted whether or not to donate to The Native Plant Society. Malia reviewed that we decided to donate \$250 to Arborcrest and \$100 to the Native Plant Society for the fence. The question was raised about the parade budget. Marie suggested that we increase the 4th of July budget to \$200.00. Malia asked if we need to vote on increasing the donation to BRAAC to \$225. At this point, Evenlight wanted to interject her research on some needed items for the Memorial Garden. She had previously sent an email for our review.

Horticulture (continued): All agreed that watering the garden is, of course, a major necessity. Evenlight pointed out that our present system consists of coils of heavy hoses that must be dragged for some distance to get the memorial gardens watered, a laborious job. BRGC has been working for years trying to come up with an easier way to water considering some of our members/workers do not have the strength or ability to do the watering using our present equipment. Evenlight has worked/researched with other members and she believes that retractable/house hoses would be the best solution. She had previously sent the board members links to her research. This retractable, housed option costs more: <https://www.hoselink.com>.

The other option would be a utility wheel, not retractable: <https://www.eleyhosereels.com/pages/what-style-of-garden-hose-reel-is-right-for-you>. Evenlight has approached Cory, the Blowing Rock landscape manager who took her request for to Shane Fox, Town Manager and to Jennifer, Parks and Rec manager. Unfortunately, they have said they do not want the proposed hoses to be placed behind the wall of the Memorial Gardens. Their concerns were that someone might be injured or mess with

the new hose system. Presently, unhoused coils of heavy hoses are there, unreeled coils, lying on the ground.

Evenlight asked that Marie write a letter to the city officials and BRAAC and copy BRGC member Deb Boyd, who is also a BRAAC member and is 100% behind Evenlight's request for better hoses. We would like to get a better system this season. Susan Sweet made a motion that we support Evenlight in the cost of the housed, retractable hoses. Marita offered a second.

The board agreed to support Evenlight's recommendation that we draft a letter and meet with BRAAC and share our concerns about the watering of the Memorial Garden. The proposal to enlist support from BRAAC and propose our solution to the watering problem to the Town Council was supported by the board. Lynda Steele volunteered to help with drafting the letter which would include the disadvantages of the current situation and the advantages of a better watering system.

Evenlight would like to get professional plant tags. Most people viewing the gardens want to know what all the plants are. Marie made a motion to purchase the 100 plant tags for \$580.84. Marita seconded the motion. Later, Susan proposed that we approved up to \$600.00 for these stakes. Mona seconded the motion. Stakes would be color coded to distinguish between native plants and non-native plants.

Wrapping up Business: The board approved a motion by Crystal to donate \$100.00 toward the gardens that were lost in Banner Elk. This was seconded and approved. Evenlight also suggested that some flowers from our Memorial Garden be donated.

Lynda Steele announced that we could use A.I. companion (a feature of Zoom) to record the minutes of the board meetings by setting it up beforehand.

Marie adjourned the meeting at 11:45.

Next meeting will be May 21 at 10 am via Zoom.

Respectfully submitted,
Martha Anne Gilliam, Secretary