

Minutes of the TNPS Board Meeting held on June 10, 2025
Zoom meeting

The meeting commenced at 7:00 pm Eastern time. Mitchell Kent, President, presiding. In attendance: Karen Hill, Tim Kaltenbach, Shelley King, Bart Jones, Kim Sadler, Mary Priestley, Juanita Wade, Lesley Gunn, Anne Ballentine, and Sue Bible. Ken Rea joined at about 7:25 and Allan Trently joined at around 7:35.

Mitchell welcomed everyone and introductory remarks were made.

The minutes of the March 11, 2025 board meeting were presented. There were no questions, additions or deletions asked or made. Kim Sadler moved to approve the minutes. The motion was seconded by Mary Priestley. Motion carried. The minutes were approved.

(2:50)

TREASURER'S REPORT

Kim Sadler presented the Treasurer's report as of May 31, 2025. A copy is made a part of these minutes. \$1,500 in Book Royalties has been received since January. Donations are healthy. Colonel Ronald Russell Ragon passed away two years ago and his wife, Margaret Fletcher, makes a yearly donation of \$2,000 in his honor. Four of the awards for Grants for Native Plants have been made possible through this donation. Membership renewals are described as healthy as well. We have had nine lifetime memberships this year. The Center for Cedar Glade Studies booklet has sold well with \$400 received and 700 booklets sold. The cost to the Native Plant Society was \$2,500. Twenty-five percent of the cost of publishing the booklet has been already recovered. Sale of the Wildflower book has been good. Total income equals \$12,251.54.

The annual meeting expenses have been small so far at a little over \$600 but additional expenses will be coming soon. Mary has done a wildflower book for children. These books will be made available alongside the adult wildflower book at table events so there was a \$122 expense associated with this book. The newsletter expenses totaled a little over \$600. Kim described the web email account and its expenses. Education and Outreach expenses total a little more than \$3,000. Kim described the Elsie Quarterman festival, the nature journaling activity, and the handouts. Government fees equal \$39 for the filing of Form 1099 through QuickBooks. Kim will file the Charitable Organization filing. Office expenses totaled \$1,800.

We are now "in the black" with a net income of \$1,400. We have \$71,000 in cash now.

Bart Jones moved to approve the Treasurer's Report. Mary Priestley seconded the motion and the motion carried.

OLD BUSINESS

2025 Annual Conference – Bart Jones

One payment for the conference center has been made. Another one is due August 12 for \$1,554.85, and the last one is due September 12 for \$932.91. The room, equipment rental and food are all included in these figures, plus a 21% service charge. This figures to \$150 per person. Food choices will need to be made and submitted to the park by September 12th. Bart detailed the planned meals. We need to have 80% of 50 rooms reserved by August 12 or we will need to pay the difference to the Park. Bart adds that he will be out of town the week before the conference so he requests that if something should come up, we step in to help. There is a dedicated link that goes directly to reserving the rooms at our discounted rate. The discounted rate ends on August 12.

(20:00)

Kim asked about cancellations and refunds and Bart discussed refunds through TNPS and the refunds that would have to go through the park. We gave the park an estimated number of attendees at 100 people. The \$150 registration fee is based on 100 attendees.

(25:58)

On Friday night of the conference, we will have Todd Crabtree talk about the 40th Anniversary of the TN Rare Plant Act. The field trips have been planned. One will be at Walker Branch State Natural Area, and the other will be at John Ross's farm nearby. On Saturday night Professor John Evans will be speaking about finding the new Phacelia species and finding things in your own backyard. Sunday there will be an Island Loop Trail hike near the Lodge. Also, John Manion will have a workshop at the Lodge on Saturday morning for those who don't want to hike. His talk will be on the meanings of the scientific names of plants.

(28:40)

Complementary registration, room, and meal fees for the speakers were discussed. Bart offered to the speakers the \$250 honorarium. John Manion asked about covering the cost of the room and Bart deferred it till later since we had not yet discussed it. We have in the past comped rooms and registration fees (which will include the food costs this time). We can give them a check for their room because they will have to make their own reservation for their room. The total for the room is \$178 including all the fees and taxes. The trip leaders will not be paid. The three speakers will be included in the head count for the food.

(35:55)

Mitchell asked for a Motion to cover the cost of one night room reservation and the honorarium for each of the three speakers. Karen Hill so moved. Sue Bible seconded the motion. Motion carried.

(37:00)

Karen Hill mentions a scholarship for the registration fee (which includes food) and two nights' room reservation for this year's conference. Last year Karen contacted the student members of TNPS by email about the available scholarship for last year's conference. The application form required specific student information and why they should be given a scholarship. Between 25 and 30 students received the email. There are currently around 125 student members now.

(39:56)

Mitchell asked for a Motion to cover the cost of registration and room fee for one scholarship to this year's conference. Anne Ballentine moved. Karen Hill seconded the motion. The motion carried. Tim can create the student list and Tim, Mitchell and Karen will craft an email to the students. If they stay at the Inn they will have to make their own reservation, and we will reimburse them.

(45:00)

Mitchell mentions that the TNPS newsletter is coming out soon. Donna Bollenbach is in the middle of difficult family circumstances but has decided to continue to handle the responsibilities of the newsletter.

(46:50)

Grants Committee Report and Plans for 2025 – Karen Hill

The newsletter recounts what was accomplished at each school. We had 2 elementary schools, a middle school and two high schools. Karen read the recap from one of the schools' teachers. One of the schools re-did the entire front of their school. Mary Priestley suggested, and Karen agreed, that this information about the success of the grants should be included on the Facebook page as well as the website. One of the schools' teachers was fired so Karen will check with the school's principal to see if they will refund the money or start a new project this year with the money. So, five of the six grants were successful.

(53:26)

For this school year the grant applications must be in by June 30th. Karen relates that mentors for this program are hard to find. She explained that the mentors are very important to the program. Karen suggested that the mentors be rewarded for their efforts. She suggests asking the mentors what book they would like to receive from a list as a gift for their service.

(57:00)

A motion is made by Kim Sadler to cover the cost of a small gift to the Grants 4 Plants mentors. It is seconded by Anne Ballentine and the motion passed unanimously.

(1:00:20)

Social Media Update – Anne Ballentine

Anne said she is feeling more confident in her role in posting material on different platforms. She asked that people send her material to post. She feels like there is now more traffic to our page. Everyone complimented Anne of the job she is doing.

(1:02:44)

Proposal for TNPS Scholarship Fund – Tim Kaltenbach

Tim discussed a \$1,000 university level scholarship from TNPS to various state colleges and universities in Tennessee. The question is raised as to whether we have the capacity to fund these scholarships. The proposed way to fund the program is to solicit donations from our members specifically dedicated to the scholarship campaign. Tim would like the board to determine whether it is a feasible project for our organization. It is proposed that we give five \$1,000 scholarships per year. Two different sources of the money could be (1) our savings in reserve or (2) we could try to raise up to \$5,000. Tim believes we could probably solicit corporations for this as opposed to relying strictly on our members. Mitchell suggested we device a button on the website to initiate this donation to the scholarship fund. In this way the donor could be a member or someone from the general public. Those funds would be placed in a unique account for this purpose. These scholarships would not be a continual commitment. We could decide each year whether we will do the scholarships at all and if so, how many.

(1:15:10)

Kim shared that our expenses have increased by between \$3,000 and \$5,000 a year. She said she usually moves between \$7,000 and \$8,000 a year into savings. Kim stated that we would be able to afford these scholarships. Kim made a motion to pursue the investigation of the feasibility of these scholarships. Karen Hill seconded the motion and the motion passed.

Tim briefly went over the various ways the scholarships could be funded. Tim also pointed out that we are under no commitment to continue with the scholarships if we don't have the necessary donations to fund them. Tim related there is no downside to this project. We are not locked into this program in any aspect of it. Mitchell suggested that we have this mechanism ready to go for this year's Giving Tuesday. Karen related that instead of a separate account Kim could just make a line-item notation of the money received for scholarships. Karen presented the question if this should be included for the Grants for Native Plants. Kim explained how QuickBooks separates the donation designations. Karen suggested we make two \$2,500 scholarships rather than five \$1,000 scholarships.

(1:30:30)

Ken Rea made a motion to create the infrastructure to support the scholarship fund. It was seconded by Mary Priestley. All board members present approved the motion. There were no negative votes.

(1:31:30)

TNPS Membership Dues Increase Proposal – Mitchell Kent

Mitchell presented a chart listing various Native Plant Society dues from across the South, with notations of proposed increases for TNPS dues. Mitchell proposed that the noted increases be adopted. Mitchell suggested a proposed implementation date of January 1, 2026. Discussion of the student dues amount took place. Mitchell noted that very few students sign up for membership after they graduate and he believes it might relate to the membership dues being free and therefore not worth anything to them.

Kim suggested that a firewall be developed for the website in the future so that only members could attend online seminars and utilize our website resources. Currently there is no real benefit to paying the dues when all aspects of TNPS are free to the general public. Anne said she explains to people who ask that the dues provide for online seminars.

(1:44:16)

A motion was made by Mary Priestley to implement the dues increase as shown in the chart on January 1, 2026. The motion was seconded by Kim Sadler. All attending approved and the motion carried.

Mitchell will work on a notification to the members of the dues increase.

(1:46:10)

Education Outreach – Mitchell Kent

Mitchell talked about the events that took place in East Tennessee. There is an event in Crossville coming up. There will not be events during the summer but there are several events planned for the Fall. Lesley Gunn spoke of the events that occurred in Middle Tennessee. Memberships and book sales have been good. Future events in Middle Tennessee include the Hummingbird Festival and the Wilderness Expo, both to be held at the Barfield Crescent Wilderness Station. Shelley King relates that they will attend the Lavendar Festival. Anne Ballentine told of the Trolls at Memphis Botanic Gardens and Earth Day at University of Memphis. Anne anticipated that there will not be many other events until next Spring. Bart Jones relates that he spoke at a Masters Gardeners event in Hernando, Mississippi and is invited to speak at their state meeting in April.

Mitchell related that the children's book will be available to sell at the Outreach events.

(1:55:30)

NEW BUSINESS

Latest Membership Totals and Retention Status in 2025 – Mitchell Kent

Total membership is around 740 people. We have had good renewals this year and we've had good participation at outreach events. We have also lost over 100 members. We do tend to sign up more new members than we lose. Our retention percentage is 78%, which

is about average for non-profit groups like ours. Mitchell intends to review these numbers and determine why members decide not to renew.

Kim Sadler thanked Tim for taking over the membership aspect and thanked Mitchell for his hard work.

Meeting was adjourned at 8:00 Central, 9:00 Eastern time.

The next board meeting will be held on Tuesday, Sept. 9, 2025, at 7:00 pm Eastern Time; 6:00 pm Central Time.