

## Environmental Education Commission

### Meeting Minutes

May 12, 2020

Virtual Meeting via Zoom

1 pm

**In attendance:** Ronnie Morris, Murt Conover, Jessica Dixon, Justin Gremillion, Robin Dufilho, Brian Salvatore, Ashley Cain, Dean Blackett, Dinah Maygarden, Jennifer Roberts, Cole Ruckstuhl, Connie Conner, Christy Flynn, Brenda Nixon, Heather Egger, Pierre LaCaze, Kelia Bingham, Brian Gautreau, Kea Sherman, Christopher Chappell

**Staff present:** Thomas Gresham, Venise Ortego

**Guests present:** Jill Cowart on behalf of LDOE

**Call to order:** 1:00 pm

**Minutes from prior meeting:** New meeting minutes reviewed. Cole made a motion to accept. Brian seconded. Motion passed. February meeting minutes were reviewed. No comments. Kelia made a motion to accept. Heather seconded. Motion passed.

**Financial Report:** Venise provided the financial report. Showed the overview. Explained for the new members that most of the money goes to KLB. A portion of Professional Services (\$630,000) goes to KLB. There was little spent this quarter due to pandemic. Jill explained the budget for the Teacher Leader Summit. Due to cancellations, the budget was not expended. If able to get contracts in place for virtual phenomenon, there's a quick turnaround due to needing to spend quickly due to deadlines. Statutory funding is lost if not spent. Brenda Nixon clarified that the professional services goes to KLB. Venise explained that in addition, there was the end of Brian Gautreau's salary.

**Coordinators Report:** Venise provided the Coordinator's report.

Thomas gave the deadline for the Arts/Language Arts contest. An alternate recognition program to replace the governor's mansion is being considered - contacted CC Lockwood. Public affairs at DOE will help publicize. Thomas invited suggestions for themes for next year.

The symposium was cancelled and rescheduled during the Teacher Leader Summit. Environmental sessions were not held at that time but will do something in conjunction with the summit.

A focus group is being considered for a high school environmental science curriculum. Nominations were welcomed for approximately 10-15 teachers and some non-formal educators to weigh in. Brenda suggested Maude Walsh. Brenda asked about cost. It will be discussed with the budget to see if stipends can be given. Steve Babcock will be the lead over the next 6-9 months. Focus group will analyze resources including LDOE scope and sequence, 2.0-3.0 versions. Overall project could take a couple of years with the goal of having a nationally recognized Environmental Science curriculum. Initial cost will be less than \$10,000, but could cost more depending on the scope. Jen asked if commission members could participate. Jill replied yes with some monitoring at a lower level if interested. Brian Salvatore said he is interested. He referenced a high school senior who developed a curriculum. Brian G asked who decided composition. Jen recommended Jeanell Sullivan.

GNOF grant - Ripple Effect is reviewing 10 phenomena submitted by teachers. The remaining funds from GNOF will pay Ripple Effect and stipends. Remaining funds, due to fewer teachers finishing, will be allocated.

Thomas stated that Green Schools/Southeastern Sustainability Center met last week. Last year's proposal was built and will continue to develop.

An update of the NOAA grant was provided. Applicants will be chosen for Coastal Fellows. A virtual workshop will be held Jan - March. There will be 3 webinars/workshops. The LSU River Center can host with social distancing. GI fisheries lab (Dinah) and LUMCON (Murt) will be able to adapt to virtual if needed.

Ronnie asked about the scope of workshops. There will be 40 teachers for grades 5-12 that will develop phenomena to be posted on the La. Phenomena website. Jill updated on the science standards with an emphasis on engagement and phenomenon-based learning.

Venise and Thomas reviewed 45 LPB films and provided LPB a list with appropriate content films for families and education. The document will be shared at the next meeting. Brian G. requested going over SB 312. Jill will check on progress and update.

#### **Business:**

1. Art and Language Arts contest committee, *C. Conner*: deferred to Thomas. Thomas did not have additional information. Repeated call for themes.
2. Bylaws committee, *K. Sherman*: Kia is the new bylaws committee chair. Changes to bylaws need to be addressed. Kia requested any documents or provisions that exist. Other members are: Connie, Cole, and Dianne. Kia asked if the committee has existing revisions or do they need to begin. Venise suggested this is a good time to go through bylaws and review and update with the move to LDOE. Kia and Venise decided they will meet to discuss.
3. Grants committee, *B. Nixon*: Details of grants were in the Coordinator's report. Venise shared 2020 grants list. Eleven 2019 grantees have been offered the opportunity to apply for continuation to overcome issues with school closures, etc. The 2020 grant decisions have been made: 1 educator awarded, 1 professional development grant awarded, and 7 research grants awarded. One research grant had an issue when the supervisor used the grantee's funds for a different purchase. Another needed additional time. Adjustments have been made with flexibility. Awardees have to go through the BESE process. The remaining funds after these awards may be offered to teachers.
4. Nominating Committee, *B. Gautreau*: Nominees are working through DOE. Murt is designee waiting to see if Boards and Commissions will respond. Committee has a nominee for the advocacy position; Susan Testroet Bergeron. Cole and Jen supported Brian's nomination of Susan. Brian motioned to nominate. Cole seconded. Motion passed.

5. Outreach committee, *J. Cowart*: Jill standing in for Breigh. Jill does not have a lot of new information. Covid-19 school response offered. BESE Board will hold a meeting next week. There was a move to distance learning, accountability, etc. to ensure kids are safe, fed. Now the focus has turned to starting strong 2020, working alongside school districts. The state has received funds to buy computers for all students. There is a priority to ensure kids all have access and their health and emotional needs are met. August will most likely offer a combo of alternating home-learning and school. Internet access will be an issue. Louisiana doesn't have a broadband master plan. Text access is also an issue. Jill referenced Strong Start 2020 on La. Believes website to review policy. Ag Center is gathering curriculum/people to provide support via 4-H (recommended Badger). Jessica Dixon asked for clarification of the Badger website.

6. 2021 conference, *J. Roberts*: A decision was to tag onto the Teacher Leader Summit (TLS) but was cancelled. Discussed 2021 with Venise and Thomas. LDOE suggested a section of TLS rather than a separate symposium. How do we ensure that non-formal education has representation? Questions: Who normally attends TLS? How do we fit in? Jill gave an overview. It is held at the New Orleans Convention Center with approximately 10K participants and all levels of educators. Meetings could be strategic. Teachers bring information back to others. Brenda N. commented on concern of the loss of identity. Brian G. commented this was not a simple decision - loss of identity vs. increased numbers. Jen commented that we could offer short courses at a different time of the year, but we just couldn't make the numbers. The question was how to incorporate environmental education. Jen asked whether there was a way to invite non-formal educators. Considerations: cost of registration, travel costs, positive numbers, sessions are very different (no outdoor-based or focused on environment), opportunity for academic sessions. It would be possible to do tours off-site on the day before but would not be able to go outside during a session. Heather expressed support for doing sessions in the convention center as we did at hotels. There is a branding opportunity to reach out to those who would not normally be aware. Pierre LaCaze pointed out the need for more science sessions so there were more opportunities for science teachers. Jen suggested the need to ID a committee for next year's conference. Volunteers: Robin, Brenda, Kelia, Heather, Pierre, Dinah. Thomas and Venise both support the decision to move forward to join TLS in 2021. The 2021 date is TBA but will be in May.

7. Governor's coastal priorities, *K. Sherman*: Governor's Office of Coastal Affairs came out with an announcement of a focus on coastal programming. Governor Edwards will make the coastal program a priority over the next five years. State funding was going to be appropriated to the coast, but this may change. For the first time, more land is being built than lost. The Governor nominated a task force focusing on climate issues. There is hope that funding and focus doesn't change due to Covid-19. No updates have been announced, but state budgets are likely to be reduced. There is a hope for education to be worked into the plan. Brian S. mentioned a debate between diversions and marsh creation.

8. Vision setting, *J. Roberts*: Jen shared a presentation for vision setting. The revised mission - comprehensive and balanced education initiative/environmentally-literate citizenry. HB 450 #1117 Louisiana EE Act. There is a concern about loss of autonomy with move from LDWF to LDOE. The Environmental Literacy Plan is out of date. It has not been signed by the Governor. Thomas said they are developing an internal strategy to be shared soon. Educational resources will be provided widely. Grants are given annually. Curriculum will be developed. Brian commented regarding HB 312. LDOE will receive guidance from LEEC. Possibly moving into more of an advisory role. We need to hold strong to serving non-formal educators as well as formal. The EE clearinghouse role needs to be revisited. Discussion was

held about what is being lost with the move to LDOE. HB 312:

[www.legis.la.gov/legis/ViewDocument.aspx?d=1165360](http://www.legis.la.gov/legis/ViewDocument.aspx?d=1165360) <https://info.badger.com>

Ronnie asked for an explanation about reasons for the move to LDOE. Venise and Thomas elaborated that it was budget and mission compatibility driven. Ronnie asked what is most value for students - preparing students for the workforce. Thomas added that some of the budget is allocated to STEM pathways which is career oriented. Kia commented on the broad nature of the mission and questioned if that has changed and why and how. Venise will share the Environmental Literacy Plan. There is a need to review the mission and the strategic planning process. Jen wrapped up as time was limited. She will invite others to join the strategic planning committee.

Dean Blackett commented that students who graduate from his program go to work for the state or go out of state and return to college. There are 5 failing school districts in NE Louisiana. There are career opportunities for students with environmental science backgrounds.

**New Business:** There was no new business discussed.

**Upcoming Meetings:** Venise suggested that the August meeting be moved to August 25 to avoid conflict with the start of school and to stay in keeping with the bylaws. Motion to be moved to August 25 was made by Jen. Brian G. seconded the motion. The motion passed.

**Adjournment:** Cole made the motion to adjourn. Jen seconded.

Notes by: Diane Maygarden