



March, 2023

# Fort Bend Buzz

the monthly newsletter of the Fort Bend Beekeepers Association

*fostering safe, responsible, successful beekeeping*

The Tuesday March 14, 2023 meeting of the Fort Bend Beekeepers will be held at 7:00 pm at Fort Bend County's "Bud" O'Shieles Community Center, 1330 Band Rd., Rosenberg, Texas. Visitors (and new members) are always welcome. Membership dues are \$10.00 for the calendar year. If you haven't yet paid for 2023, keep a ten dollar bill in your wallet and get your dues for 2023 paid at our March meeting. The meeting will be called to order at 7:30 after 30 minutes of social time.

## March Meeting

We are back to our normal meeting schedule. Our March meeting will be in-person only at the O'Shieles Community Center:

**Tues., March 14, 7:00 - 9:00 pm**

## HLSR

The three week run of the 2023 Houston Livestock Show continues to March 20. One of the most popular AGVENTURE attractions is the honey bee exhibit that is hosted by volunteers from our four local beekeeping groups (Fort Bend, Brazoria, Harris and Houston). The volunteer signup schedule is posted at [harriscountybeekeepers.org](http://harriscountybeekeepers.org). At least two beekeepers are needed for the exhibit, but extras are always helpful. The observation hives are almost always surrounded by a crowd.

## Ask a dozen beekeepers...

Here is this month's Q (from one of our members) and an A:

**Q:** I started feeding my bees back weeks and weeks ago. They are still taking the sugar water that I give them. Would it be a bad idea to stop?

**An A:** Feeding sugar water should be a "maintenance" measure when forage is scarce in order to keep the hive population high. It is spring now and lots of plants are in bloom, so you should let the bees "get back to being bees".

It is fascinating to contemplate how

these insects live together as colonies and subsist cooperatively so closely aligned with plants.

Like the honey they produce, the nectar that bees gather from flowers is a complex mixture of all manner of natural sugars. We often remark that "plants are smart" since they have evolved a "deal" with bees (and other pollinators): nectar from flowers traded for getting a grain of pollen in the right place to produce the seed for the plant's next generation. It is to the plant's benefit to have its blooms receive pollen from as far away as possible to assure genetic diversity in its offspring.

For a short while it is probably ok for bees to subsist only on your sugar water, but they are prefer nectar gathered from flowers.

## February Meeting Notes

President Brent Yaschuk opened the meeting and greeted everyone. There were five first-time attendees who introduced themselves and were welcomed.

Harrison Rogers and Jim Orr promoted the AGVENTURE honey bee exhibit at the Houston Rodeo which started on February 28th and runs through March 19th. There are still volunteer shifts available.

Vice President Danessa Yaschuk announced registration is now open for Central Texas Beekeepers Association's annual beekeeping school in Brenham on April 1st. Also, the Nature Fest planned for April 15th at Seabourne Creek Nature Park has

been rescheduled for November 4th.

Gene DeBons' history moment went way back in history this time as he shared passages from Roman scholar Pliny the Elder's (23-79 A.D., ) encyclopedic work, *Natural History*, and the words of Greek mathematician, philosopher and physician Pythagoras, (ca. 570 to ca. 490 BCE). Both historical figures considered honey to have great nutritional and medicinal value.

Gene then explained how the FBBA website's 'Help! I Have Bees' tab works and what members need to do if they want the opportunity to be notified of swarms that need to be captured. There is a form which must be completed and turned in each year. (You can request the form from Lynne in person at the meeting or by email at [info@FortBendBeekeepers.org](mailto:info@FortBendBeekeepers.org)). If you are on the list, you need to answer your phone when Gene calls and have your equipment ready to go. Swarms don't hang around long, so it is imperative to get to them immediately.

Danessa introduced Dayna Druke, our webmaster and speaker for the evening. Dayna is originally from Wisconsin but has been a Texas resident most of her adult life. She is a geologist turned beekeeper, with about 40 colonies in Fort Bend County. In addition to bees, she has dairy cows, chickens, ducks, and goats. Oh and a husband and five children. And in her spare time, she homeschools, has a large vegetable garden, plants fruit and nut trees, is

a 4-H Leader, and a nutrition and fitness enthusiast.

Dayna's presentation, "Obtaining Agricultural Valuation (1-D-1) for Honey Bees in Fort Bend County" was very informative. She recently completed the 5-year process for her property and knows first-hand how difficult dealing with the Appraisal District can be. She explained the purpose of Article 1-D and later 1-D-1 of the Texas Constitution, is to protect farmers and ranchers from being taxed off their land due to urbanization increasing their land's market value (and property taxes). Agricultural appraisal allows farm and ranch land to be taxed on its capacity to produce agricultural products, rather than its market value.

There are rules, of course. Just because you have animals or a garden, does not mean you have a qualified agricultural use. And the property must be used for five of the preceding seven years; therefore, to initially be approved it will take at least five years of ag activity and once approved, you cannot let ag activity lapse more than two years in any seven year period. While the State's rules are straightforward, each County has a lot of leeway in how the rules are applied, in particular the minimum acreage required for each type of activity and the degree of intensity (how many animals, trees, bee hives, etc. per acre are required). This has resulted in some counties being 'friendlier' than others to property owners seeking approval. Beekeeping is the only ag use where State law specifies the minimum and maximum acreage allowed (5 min & 20 max.)

For the application process, the form to complete is State form, "Form 50-129" <https://comptroller.texas.gov/forms/50-129.pdf>. Dayna recommends taking photos often of your apiary and to include some, along with aerial photos or Google map satellite image showing the location of your hives. If you have a Land Lease

Agreement, be sure it includes: use of land; number of acres; associated accounts (if applicable); cash/no cash value; if it is adjoining leased acres, all signatures of all property owners; and, duration of the lease. If you have a Hive Lease Agreement, it will include: name of property owner and of the beekeeper; the address of the property; how many hives will be provided; start and end date of the contract; and typically spell out the duties and responsibilities of each party; and of course, the fee agreed to. You should maintain all receipts for expenses related to your beekeeping. If you sell honey or products from your hives, you should maintain these records as well. Register your apiary at no cost with the Texas Apiary Inspection Service in accordance with Texas Agriculture Code Section 131.045. And once you have submitted everything to the Appraisal District, prepare to be disapproved. There will almost certainly be something that is not filled out correctly or is missing; address the reasons for the disapproval and re-submit. There is an Appeal process and you may have to go through it as well.

Once your property is approved for Beekeeping agricultural use, you can then consider changing the ag use to Wildlife Management. Wildlife Management is typically a more cost-efficient means of maintaining a favorable tax valuation; however, it still involves some commitment of time and resources. Counties typically require a yearly report and some require a wildlife management plan prepared by a biologist.

Dayna answered questions, and then having a bit of time remaining in the meeting, Lynne Jones invited Ed Veiseh, FBBA member and Secretary of the the Texas Association of Professional Bee Removers to come up and tell everyone a little about the group.

TXAPBR is a trade association of and for professional bee removers.

Their goal is to ensure their members remove live bees as safely as possible and with the highest ethical business practices. There are two types of memberships: Swarm Capture Specialist and Colony Removal Professional. Swarm Capture Specialist membership is \$25/year and does not have voting privileges. Colony Removal Professional is for those who perform both colony removals and swarm captures. Membership is \$50/year and has voting privileges. Members of the public can use the TXAPBR website to find a member to capture a swarm or to remove a colony. If you want to learn more about the group or to fill out an application, go to: [www.txapbr.org](http://www.txapbr.org)

Lynne then conducted the door prize drawings. Attendance was 46 plus 2 online.

## Treasurer's Report 2/28/23

Incorrect report was included in newsletter mailed to members. Below is the correct report.

Our reported treasury balance on January 27, 2023 was \$1,014.64. Since that date we received \$150.00 in dues and a \$20.00 donation. Expenses were \$9.95 for Outreach materials from honey.com and \$12.99 for the monthly Squarespace fee. The resulting balance is \$1,161.70. (\$1,111.70 in the checking account plus \$50.00 in cash to make change.)

## TEXAS A&M AGRI LIFE EXTENSION



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