

**PUBLIC PARTICIPATION AND EDUCATION
(PPE)SUBCOMMITTEE
GALVESTON BAY COUNCIL**

**Meeting Minutes
Wednesday, March 6, 2024
10:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.**

Hybrid Meeting (Virtual Meeting Via Microsoft Teams and In-person at 17041 El Camino Real, Suite 210, Houston, TX 77058)

Subcommittee Chair: Cindy Wilems, Education Director, Galveston Bay Foundation (GBF)

Subcommittee Vice Chair: Kendall Guidroz, Senior Planner, Houston-Galveston Area Council (H-GAC)

GBEP Representative: Kari Howard

Attendees: Kendall Guidroz, Houston-Galveston Area Council (H-GAC); Christie Taylor, Texas AgriLife Extension (TALE); Maggie Sager, Turtle Island Restoration Network (TIRN); Bethany Foshee, Coastal Prairie Conservancy (CPC); Morton Sager, Bayou Preservation Association (BPA); Amy Neblett, Artist Boat (AB); Wendy Reistle, University of Houston Clear Lake/Environmental Institute of Houston (UHCL/EIH); Elizabeth Schneider, Galveston Park Board of Trustees (GPBT); Nicole Plowman, Texas Parks and Wildlife Department; Yvette Stewart, Audubon Texas; Melissa Wong, Houston Zoo; Garrett McLeod, Dow Houston Area Operations; Chloe Dannenfesler, American Bird Conservancy (ABC); Anna Deichmann, (ABC); Liz Virgl (ABC), Cassidy Kempf, Houston Parks and Recreation Department (HPARD); Alicia Fontenot, Texas Children in Nature (TCiN); Sabraya Knight, National Wildlife Federation (NWF); Anna Weiss, Vision Galveston (VG); Candy Hattingh, (VG); Ashley DeLeon, Harris County Precinct 4 Parks Department; Patti Bonnin, Houston Arboretum and Nature Center (HANC); Huy Vu, Environmental Protection Agency (EPA); Lindsey Lippert, Galveston Bay Estuary Program (GBEP); Lisa Marshall, (GBEP); Janelle Estrada, (GBEP); Matthew Abernathy, (GBEP); Christian Rines, (GBEP); Ellen Creecy, (GBEP)

TERN in the Classroom — Adaptation, Community, and Connection, Yvette Stewart, Audubon Texas

Ms. Stewart began with an overview of the TERN in the classroom program that was previously funded by GBEP. The project's intentions in 2020 changed and adapted to meet the students' needs during the pandemic. Audubon Texas staff worked to meet the grant goals and were able to engage a previous student of the Audubon Conservation Leaders (ACL) program as an intern to bring the birding lessons to a school campus. There were two young women that participated in early programs and continued through several years that provided audio clip feedback about the significance and positive impact these programs provided. Ms. Stewart discussed lessons learned about engaging young professionals and the mentorship that was vital to the success of the program. The key takeaway was that successful programming required investing time and connection with the participants, working with the students where they are at and not assuming what they know or what may be important to them, and as leaders in our field, we can gain great value from continual learning.

A Vision for Community - Dr. Anna Weiss and Candy Hattingh, Vision Galveston

Dr. Weiss gave a short introduction to the five initiatives of Vision Galveston which include Build Galveston (workforce housing), Measure Galveston (collecting, analyzing, and communicating data), Engage Galveston (public outreach), Incubate Galveston (supporting businesses), and Green Galveston (green space and infrastructure). All of these initiatives work together in a holistic way. Then Dr. Weiss and Ms. Hattingh covered several projects within Green Galveston and Incubate Galveston programs. Some of the Green Galveston projects include plans to utilize city parks as demonstrations sites for green infrastructure. Incubate Galveston programs within Vision Galveston, such as the MORTAR project, supports and provides collaborative opportunities for local business owners that feed back into the community and really address the local environmental issues. Significant points throughout the presentation included investing time to get feedback from the community members with regards to what concerns residents and business owners and examine a variety of ways to connect the community to conservation based on their interests.

Outdoors for All - Patti Bonnin, Houston Arboretum & Nature Center

Ms. Bonnin introduced her roles at the Houston Arboretum & Nature Center and then began to describe the accessibility programs that have grown from her personal experience as a mother. She spoke of the America Disabilities Act (ADA) basic codes, standard practices for state and county parks, and some of the common misconceptions of whether these basic regulations are actually functional. There is a difference between basic ADA and usability or accessibility. She mentioned that everyone will have a different experience based on their abilities. Many parks and nature centers were built before ADA guidelines came online. Ms. Bonnin then began to share several examples and personal experiences with making improvements to the Houston Arboretum and other parks as they addressed accessibility. The resonating message was that there are as many different ways to address accessibility as there are challenges and while some improvements can be costly, its best to start where you can, and to communicate the information on your website or on resources so those with disabilities can determine what they can do for themselves.

Current Project Updates

- Kendall Guidroz (H-GAC), Trash Bash, 19-90216: The 30th Annual Trash Bash for 2024 is currently scheduled for March 23, 2024. Planning is ongoing; there are 13 sites this year.
- Maggie Sager (TIRN), Microplastics in the Galveston Bay Watershed: The Big Impacts of Tiny Pollution, 21-10096: TIRN student curriculum and classroom kits have been created by TIRN and were used in the classroom during the fall 2023 semester. Microplastics processing is underway by UHCL and TIRN.
- Wendy Reistle (UHCL/EIH); Mobilizing the Environmental Education Community through Prairie Education, 22-30208 - Ms. Reistle shared EcoRise has completed their desk audit and presented their project findings to service providers in Houston on Jan. 11, 2024. Native Prairies has four spring school field trips planned in 2024 and will be offering a free “girls on the prairie summer camp” in June 2024 (flyer coming soon!). They are currently working on their final report for this project.
- Morton Sager (BPA); Engaging Diverse Communities in Conservation, 23-40077 (HCDE); Mr. Sager announced the Certified Interpretive Guide (CIG) new trainees are leading interpretive tours at corresponding nature centers and parks. The funds from the grant have been distributed to the trainee as their stipend. Additionally, BPA will partner with CASE (Center for Afterschool, Summer, and Enrichment) to host two afterschool guided walks. Both walks will take place in Fonteno Park, to help highlight the other programs we are working on. The first walk will take place on April 15th at 4:00pm with the afterschool students of Havard Elementary. The second walk will take place on April 22nd at 4:00pm with the students of Purple Sage Elementary.

- Kendall Guidroz (H-GAC); Water Quality Outreach Implementation for Vulnerable Rural Populations, 23-40239 (H-GAC); Ms. Guidroz stated The Coastal Communities Vulnerable Rural Population project has coordinated with local city staff and community partners in Liverpool to advertise Homeowner Onsite Sewage Facilities workshops using water bills, mayor newsletters, and door to door distribution of handouts in identified neighborhoods. Seventeen residents attended workshops in Liverpool on March 8, 2024. Thanks to funding from another community grant the eligible attendees will also be able to get a no-cost system pump out.
- Erin Kinney (HARC); GBRC Vietnamese Outreach, 23-40249 (HARC); Dr. Kinney announced that a summary of the Galveston Bay Report Card (GBRC) in Vietnamese was provided to the crabbers that attended last year's workshops. An upcoming marine debris cleanup with the Vietnamese Student Association is scheduled for March 16th at Seawolf Park, Galveston. These are existing groups that Tuyen, GBF's summer intern on this project, made initial contact with and is an effort to continue engagement with Vietnamese students and communities. There are between 32 and 50 people expected to attend. Dr. Kinney also shared out the GBRC Vietnamese and English flyer with Nikki Fitzgerald at Texas A&M AgriLife for additional outreach.

Subcommittee Roundtable and Announcements

- Trash Bash is coming up Saturday, March 23, 2024! Flyers are distributed at the meeting and via email.

Next Meeting

Next meeting will be held on Wednesday, June 5, 2024, at 10:00 a.m.

Meeting Adjourned

