

**Northeast Horticultural Therapy Network Membership Meeting Minutes  
December 7, 2020 via Zoom**

**In Attendance:**

Board of Directors: Erin Backus, Lynn Zeltman, Kathy Perry, Juniper Shay, Irene Barber

NEHTN Members: Colleen Griffin, Deborah Kraus, Alan Eddy, Hollie Marron, Ciri Malamud

The meeting was called to order by Erin Backus at 7:09 pm.

**Old Business:**

A. President's Report (Erin Backus)

1. NEHTN, like all organizations, has had to adjust to the challenges presented by the Covid 19 pandemic.
2. NEHTN received positive feedback for its first virtual workshop, *Adaptive Tools in Horticultural Therapy*, held via Zoom on October 31<sup>st</sup>, 2020.
3. It was agreed that NEHTN's mission statement continues to reflect the aims and values of the organization, after review by the board during its 11/30/20 meeting.
4. Erin has learned to navigate through the "back end" of the NEHTN website in order to add updates and send emails, which saves the organization the cost of paying the website manager, Jeremy.
5. NEHTN has purchased its own Zoom account to allow for monthly meetings. Previously, the organization relied on the Free Zoom or Coastal Maine Botanical Gardens' Zoom account via Irene.
6. Alan has volunteered to be on the Fundraising Committee.

B. Treasurer's Report (Lynn Zeltman)

The NEHTN bank account currently holds \$2018.78, minus the outstanding monthly Zoom charge of \$15.89 for tonight's meeting.

C. Vice President's Report (Lisa Biggio, in absentia via email)

NEHTN has seen a decrease in active members, with 36 members currently in good standing (last year NEHTN had 52 members in good standing). Many member's dues have lapsed. The current cost of renewal is \$25.00 for regular members, and \$15.00 for students. Lisa suggested topics of discussion for tonight's membership meeting include rethinking membership dues (including renewal dates) as well as membership benefits.

**New Business:**

A. Membership: Erin stated that it has been challenging to attract and keep new members and asked for brainstorming ideas from the meeting participants.

- a. Membership Outreach: Colleen suggested reaching out to various community college horticulture programs throughout New England, for example Southern Maine Community College. Ciri suggested reaching out to Bergen County Community College, as well as the horticulture departments of state universities, cooperative extension departments, occupational and recreational therapy educational programs, and botanical gardens. Irene suggested that we all take the initiative to inform local colleges and universities about NEHTN. Erin asked the participants to send her the names of colleges with horticulture programs. Deborah

stated that NEHTN previously had board members affiliated with universities such as UNH and URI. Connections with universities would also enhance NEHTN's resources.

- b. **Membership Dues:** Discussion ensued whether it is better to have: (1) a system of renewing dues once a year at the same date for all members (previous system) or (2) a system in which each member renews on the anniversary date of when they first became members (current system). It was agreed that it would be easier for bookkeeping to have an annual membership renewal date, perhaps to correspond with the first day of spring or National Horticultural Therapy Week in March. In addition, an annual date would allow for a coordinated membership drive and PR campaign. Alan stated that another organization to which he belongs collects their annual dues in January. Even if a new member joins earlier, such as September, they only pay once. Erin mentioned that the website gives the option for automatic membership renewal, if the person allows the system to keep their credit card information.  
Hollie volunteered to call members whose dues have lapsed.
- c. **Membership Benefits:** The NEHTN website currently lists the following benefits: networking and learning opportunities; gathering at HT places of interest; listing of job openings; inclusion and access to membership directory; access to business meeting minutes. Kathy read from the 11-30-2020 board meeting minutes in which additional future benefits were discussed: free online webinars and access to workshop recordings; community of HT professionals; connectedness; resources; support; ability to apply for grants and scholarships; vehicle for people to showcase their programs/materials made in their programs, such as a Market Place; potential discounts or one-time coupons with certain vendors (e.g. Easy Grip, Hudson Valley Seed Company, Vertex, Pine Tree Seed Company). Irene suggested that another benefit could be a resource that lists HT professionals who are available to be consultants or public speakers – “Find a Horticultural Therapist” (the Ecological Landscape Alliance has a similar practice).
- d. **Survey:** Participants agreed that they would be willing to take a membership survey to identify their wishes and needs.

B. The Future of NEHTN: Erin asked what kind of organization we want NEHTN to be? Do we want to become more or less formal? If we continue as a network with membership dues and reach a certain financial threshold, we will need to become a 501c3 or 501b nonprofit for federal tax exemption purposes. (We've been floating under a certain financial threshold to avoid the need to become a 501c3). 501c3 nonprofits need to meet certain requirements, such as filing taxes, holding an annual workshop as well as 4 business meetings per year, etc. NEHTN was previously a 501c3 until it was dissolved because the requirements were too time consuming for the past president. NEHTN has been a hybrid organization, still collecting dues and holding meetings, but with fewer requirements. Erin said that NEHTN still has a registration number. A benefit of becoming a 501c3 is the ability to apply for grants. Another possibility would be to become a club without dues, relying on donations to fund scholarships and grants. Alan suggested that if NEHTN is organized as an informal ad hoc committee, we can take donations versus dues and wouldn't need to register as a 501c3. Alan knows an attorney to ask (for free) about the pros

and cons of becoming a 501c3. He will draft a letter and send it to the board for approval. Hollie suggested the possibility of Fiscal Sponsorship, in which small nonprofits are adopted as “programs” by larger nonprofits. (Therapeutic Landscapes Network might be the type of larger nonprofit that could sponsor NEHTN).

C. Workshops:

- a. Erin asked the participants about what type of virtual workshops they would like NEHTN to provide in the future. Juniper is working on a collaborative virtual networking/workshop with MAHTN. Juniper expressed interest in ethnobotany, related to her background and current work in Manhattan. Ciri is interested in the topic of HT in Manhattan. Other topics included: plantcestors; the relationship of our ancestors with the land; migration due to agricultural issues such as the potato blight; and a virtual orientation for new members during HT Week in which members meet and greet and share who we are.
- b. It was suggested that the term “workshop” might be intimidating for some people, and a better term might be “Horticultural Therapy Features” or “HT Knowledge Share”.
- c. Hollie suggested, based on an example from occupational therapy, that NEHTN might consider Live Talk audio recordings, perhaps a series of 3, based on an annual theme such as Horticulture and Mental Health. Such events might reach a broader audience.
- d. Ciri suggested NEHTN consider giving credit hours for the workshops. Erin doesn’t know how to do that. More research needs to be pursued, regarding what NEHTN could offer (e.g. Professional Development Points, Contact Hours, etc.) Kathy suggested that we follow the example of AHTA, which provides contact hour certificates for the annual conference. Each participant would be responsible for deciding if the hours would meet the requirements needed by their specific professional license (e.g. occupational therapy, nursing, etc.).
- e. Erin will send out notices of workshops to her contact list, which includes individuals and organizations beyond the membership.
- f. Erin would like NEHTN to host a virtual workshop sometime within the first 3 months of the 2021.
- g. Erin would like to use NEHTN funds to pay for a full NEHTN Zoom account which is \$150.00 per year. This account would allow for meetings to run longer than 40 minutes at a time. The participants agreed that purchasing a NEHTN Zoom account would be worthwhile.

D. Future Meetings: Erin would like to hold another member meeting for brainstorming and networking.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:40 pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

Kathy Perry, Secretary  
12/18/2020

