

ARS Valley Forge and Greater Philadelphia Chapters Joint committee

Meeting Minutes

2/24/2021

The committee held a meeting via Zoom on February 24 at 7PM. Attending: Michael Mills, Perc Moser, Steve Wright, Bob Smetana, Gary Ammon and Maris Ogg

Michael provided the committee with a list of committee member suggestions on the items that the two Chapters could combine or at least be modified to become a joint effort. The group decided to discuss the items that would probably have the best chance for the chapters to reach consensus. It was suggested that the committee initially discuss:

- 1) Holding one banquet annually for both chapters and forming a joint program committee
- 2) Holding one joint truss show per year
- 3) Combining plant sales
- 4) Publishing one newsletter
- 5) Changing each chapter's bylaws to allow one Board member to be elected from each other's chapter.
- 6) Investigating the idea of a joint website

The discussion for each of these items resulted in some actions for our respective Boards to consider.

- 1) The committee agreed that the annual banquet should be combined but had a larger discussion about all programming for meetings. We recommend that the two Boards create a joint program committee to coordinate all meetings, recommend locations for all meetings and contract with speakers and that the Boards appoint co-chairs for this committee, one from each chapter. The program committee could recommend locations for all meetings which may alternate between the Eastern and Western suburbs.
- 2) We agreed that a joint truss show be held each year at Jenkins. This year, due to the pandemic we are not certain if a show can be held, but because the truss show can occur on short notice the final decision for 2021 can be made at a later date. Michael M. And Bob S. will coordinate the show pending approval by both Boards.
- 3) Combining plant sales is slightly more complex. One obvious possibility is a joint sale at Jenkins in the Spring. The committee suggested that each Board ask two people to serve on this committee. Bob Smetana noted that Erin Van Yarhes is currently responsible for the VF plant sale and that he would consult with her about her willingness to serve in this broader capacity.

This year, the GP chapter has agreed to work with Tyler for a Spring sale and the VF chapter has cancelled its Spring sale at Jenkins due to the pandemic. Steve Wright noted that Jenkins is interested in talking with the VF chapter about the possibility of a Fall Sale and the committee agreed that a plant sale committee, probably composed of at least Erin and Karel Bernady, could pursue all the options and make a recommendation to both Boards.

- 4) Publishing one newsletter seems to be a logical next step if the Boards agree to coordinate more activities. Pending Board approval, Michael Mills is available to coordinate a small group to contribute material and help coordinate activities for a joint newsletter.
- 5) The committee is recommending that the Boards modify their by-laws to allow for the addition of a voting Board member from the sister chapter. This by-law modification could occur in June at each chapter's annual meeting. The committee recommends that the President of each chapter or his/her designee serve in this capacity on the sister chapter's Board.
- 6) The concept of a joint website – professionally designed and incorporating payment capacity – arose in the context of discussions about growing our membership. Steve Wright has been very articulate about this imperative and we believe that it includes more dedicated outreach and, potentially, shared expense toward a newly constructed website that is appealing to younger people with a sophisticated look and more digital interaction for meeting signups, banquet payment, etc. One suggestion was a joint home page that provides click-ons for each chapter's portion of the site. We should also look at methods to drive website traffic and we recommend some general improvement to content access. We know that we have strong content on Rhododendrons, but we would like to generate more web traffic.

Having agreed to the above recommendations, the committee went on to discuss several more ways to coordinate activity including the Philadelphia Flower Show and the formation of a committee to work toward growing our joint membership. We are making a further recommendation that the two Boards consider jointly sponsoring an exhibit at the flower show beginning in 2022. We believe that the change should be reflected to PHS after approval and both chapters should share expenses if the change is adopted.

The committee discussed the possible next steps to our recommendations as follows:

- 1) The two boards should discuss and approve items 1-5 above at their upcoming Board meetings; and should discuss item #6. Any questions or issues could be directed back to the Joint committee for further consideration if necessary. The next VF BOD meeting is _____ and the next GP Chapter BOD meeting is April 13th.
- 2) If the recommended items are approved by both Boards, the Boards should recruit members to create joint committees for a) programming b) truss show c) Plant sale d) newsletter.
- 3) If item #5 is approved, the President of each Board or his/her designee should plan to serve on the sister Board beginning in July. The Boards also need to craft by-law changes to accommodate the modification. Gary will assist in this endeavor.

4) If the above actions are taken, the new joint committees for programming, truss show, Plant sale and newsletter ideally should have a meeting prior to the June Annual meeting and report on any decisions to the joint membership.

5) If the above actions are taken, the Joint Committee should meet again in the September-December 2021 timeframe to evaluate the new process. At that time, the Joint committee could consider the creation of a membership committee to promote membership growth for both chapters.

6) In the June 2022 annual meeting, all the joint committees could report on the progress and problems encountered in their joint efforts. This will give the membership the opportunity to respond to the joint efforts.