



Board Meeting Minutes, Tuesday, January 14, 2025, 2:00 pm to 3:30 pm

The meeting was held at the home of Margie Gibson, Past President

Called to order at 2:00 pm.

Present: Donna Stevens, President; Betty Spence, Secretary; Margie Gibson, Past President; Dinah Demers, Marty Eberhardt, Elroy Limmer, David Philips, Stacy Sollisch

Absent: Cara Staab, Vice-President

Guest: Naava Koenigsberg, member of the Silva Creek Botanical Garden Steering Committee

Additions to agenda: Marty Eberhardt requested the addition of an agenda item “Approval of metalwork contract,” in relation to the Silva Creek Botanical Garden.

Approval of Minutes: The Secretary reported that the minutes of the Board meeting of November 12, 2024, had been approved by exchange of emails on December 18-19, 2024.

Board Reports:

President’s Report: Donna Stevens announced that she had reserved the Gomez Peak Pavilion on Sunday, May 18, 2025, for the annual joint picnic of the Gila Native Plant Society and the Bird Alliance of Southwestern New Mexico. She also reported that Don Graves had reserved the parking lot next to Gough Park on August 17, 2025, for the GNPS native plant sale. August 17th also happened to Native Plant Day this year.

Treasurer’s Report: Prior to the meeting, a Treasurer’s report was circulated for the close of December 31, 2024. Among other information, the report showed that the Gila Native Plant Society checking account as of 12/31/2024 had a balance of \$2,812.72, and the GNPS money market fund had a balance of \$6,739.84. The Silva Creek Botanical Garden checking account as of 12/31/2024 had a balance of \$33,350.93, and the SCBG money market account had a balance of \$29,685.41. The total asset balance including Edward Jones and other accounts as of 12/31/2024 was \$188,941.39.

Committee and other reports:

SCBG Presentation by Naava Koenigsberg:

Marty said that Board members had asked for a detailed review of where we stood with grant monies and projects for the Silva Creek Botanical Garden Master Plan. She introduced Naava Koenigsberg, a member of the SCBG Steering Committee, who had been keeping all the financial records on garden expenditures.

Naava said that she had been project coordinator for the Traditional Medicine Garden, project manager for the renovation of the Children's Butterfly Garden and was team coordinator for the design phase of the Children's Pollinator Garden. She was also a member of the SCBG Management Team.

As part of the SCBG Steering Committee, she had assumed the task of bookkeeping for the entire garden for the last year, both capital improvement/Master Plan projects and ongoing maintenance projects. When any invoice came in relating to the garden, she had the responsibility of deciding where the money should come from to pay it, whether from the Trail+ Grant funds, the contract with the Town of Silver City or the other funds in the SCBG accounts. She had all that documentation in a google drive and would be happy to share it with any interested Board member. She explained that, whenever possible, she would apply an expense against the contract with the Town of Silver City, since the amount the Town allocated every six months would expire if not used.

She then presented a detailed Silva Creek Botanical Garden Expense Report for 2024 showing the expenditures for the five projects included in Phase I of the garden Master Plan. The Trails+ Grant covered Phase I and covered two years ending February 2026. She and Marty would soon be sending in the mid-term progress report.

She proceeded to explain the progress and expenses so far for each of the five projects in Phase I. She noted that, although they were part of Phase I, quite a bit had been done and spent on the Habitat Thicket and the Children's Butterfly Garden prior to the grant. Money had been spent for a design of the Children's Pollinator Garden, even though it was part of Phase II, to take advantage of Ashley Pedersen's availability. No work had yet been done on the Main Entrance, but Steve Morgan had contributed a detailed design free of charge. As for the Signage/Interpretation project, originally all the frames for Level 2 (2"x3") interpretive signs for the whole garden had been included in Phase I, but the thinking now was to defer signage for areas that would not be completed for some years and to allocate the remaining grant monies for that project – around \$11,000 – elsewhere. For the Tank Wall and Mural project, prices for labor and materials had gone up substantially since the grant contract was signed.

She reported that over \$43,000 of the grant money remained to be spent by February 2026. Dinah asked whether that was likely to cover whatever else needed to be done in Phase I. Naava said she thought so, but if not, there was quite a bit available from the other sources.

Silva Creek Botanical Garden Steering Committee Report: Prior to the meeting, Marty circulated the following Steering Committee report for January 2025:

“There’s lots going on! We are approaching the halfway point for the Trails+ grant, and I will be filing a progress report by Feb. 1.

I am enclosing the new design for the **main entrance** with a narrative in a separate report, which also details choices for dealing with the increased costs. We hope to give you a recommended bid for the sand base and excavation in the next two months.

I am enclosing a separate action item to extend the contract for the **interpretive signs**. We will not use all of the \$2k in the original contract on the **habitat thicket** signs, so would like to extend the contract so that we can include the **main entrance** sign.

We hope to have a bid for you to vote on for the **wall** next month. The tank must be sealed first. Rohan is incredibly busy with large contracts, and our projects do not take priority. His and one other bid will be sought; the third possibility refused to bid. Diana Ingalls Leyba has said that she will tell me the moment she has funding for the mural.

The **Children’s Pollinator Garden** team continues to meet. We will have a plan for your review by the March board meeting.

It has become clear, as we deal with multiple contractors and all the various issues that arise in dealing with them, that the Steering Committee truly needs help in the area of construction management. This need will not wane. Elroy and I are coming up with something that we could send to our membership soliciting a volunteer. Suggestions from board members are welcome.”

Marty said that she wanted to highlight the need set out in the last paragraph of her report. Elroy had been handling the challenges of contracting for the construction elements of the garden and could not continue to do it alone. If anyone knew of a member with experience dealing with contractors, she would be eager to enlist their help.

She noted that, once Phase I was completed, it would be necessary to reconsider many other aspects, such as safety, policies for use by groups and programs. After all, although right now the emphasis was on construction and development, the real purpose of the garden was education. In the next few months she would like to gather the Steering Committee and the Garden Management Committee to do some thinking.

Unfinished and General Business

Board members’ contact information and preferences:

Donna circulated a chart and asked the Board members to fill in their contact information and to indicate how they preferred to be contacted – phone, text, email.

Approval of new budget and plans for SCBG Main Entrance:

Prior to the meeting, Marty had circulated a budget dated 1/12/25 for the Main Entrance of the Silva Creek Botanical Garden, a detailed design provided pro bono by Steve Morgan and an Action Items document explaining proposals needing Board approval.

She explained that the original Master Plan design had been rudimentary. The new detailed design provided pro bono by Steve Morgan, who was a Registered Landscape Architect, was a big improvement. It included a brick paved plaza area, with shade from desert willows and shade sails, a welcoming entrance sign with a map of the grounds, and a bench. It was designed to be a very welcoming space.

Dinah noted that the paved area was short and gave way to gravel paths. She wondered if there were plans in the future to extend the paved paths, perhaps to make the garden more accessible. Naava said it was true that the gravel paths were not ADA compliant, but it had been found by experience that they were wheelchair accessible; she thought it would not be financially feasible to pave all the paths. Marty noted that early on the decision had been made not to pave all the paths, and the Master Plan designer did not think that would be a problem. It was pointed out that the Waterworks grounds were not ADA compliant, but the Town did not have a problem with that. David noted that older structures were exempt from federal ADA rules.

Marty said that the new design for the Main Entrance would cost over \$10,000, some \$5,811 more than the original estimate. The extra expense could be covered by fundraising, but the solution she recommended was to make the case to the Trails+ grant funder that the over \$11,000 not yet spent of the funds allotted to interpretive signs for future projects in the garden would be better spent on the Main Entrance. She thought they would be amenable to that suggestion.

Motion: The Board authorized Marty to ask the funder of the Trails+ grant to re-allot the remainder of the grant money for Signage/Interpretation to the Main Entrance project.

Approval of extension of Joel Armstrong's contract for graphic design for SCBG:

Marty explained that, since Joel Armstrong would not be using the entire \$2,000 in his contract for graphic design of the Habitat Thicket signs, the Steering Committee would like to extend the contract to include graphic design of the Main Entrance sign, with an end date of July 15, 2025.

Motion: The Board approved the proposal to extend Joel Armstrong's graphic design contract to include the Main Entrance sign.

Approval of metalwork contract:

Marty explained that Steve Morgan, who did the design for the Main Entrance, had submitted a proposal to do the metalwork entailed by the project. The cost would range between \$1,300

and \$1,500. He was asking for \$700 down and the balance upon completion. His offer was a great relief, since they had been having a hard time finding someone to do the work.

Motion: The Board accepted Steve Morgan’s proposal to do the metalwork entailed by the Main Entrance project.

Naava Koenigsberg withdrew from the meeting.

New Business

Bookkeeper/Treasurer:

Donna reported that Cathleen Norman had resigned as Treasurer effective January 11, 2025. According to Article V (d) of the Bylaws, should the Vice President, Secretary, or Treasurer be unable to complete the term of office, a replacement should be nominated by the President and approved by the Board to serve the remainder of the unexpired term.

She wished to nominate Naava Koenigsberg as Treasurer because of her considerable experience in handling the finances of the Silva Creek Botanical Garden. She had talked to Naava, who was willing to be nominated Treasurer on three conditions: (1) She wished to have an experienced person set up QuickBooks for the organizations bookkeeping; she had experience using QuickBooks, which would greatly facilitate her work, but the set-up was too complicated for her; (2) She wished to have someone proof her figures; Donna was willing to do that; (3) She would like to have access if needed to a financial professional if difficult questions arose. She had provided a partial résumé indicating her qualifications, which Donna had circulated to the Board.

Stacy asked whether it might be wise to circulate the position among the membership, not because Naava was not qualified, but because she already had so much on her plate. Margie felt that for a position as sensitive as Treasurer we needed to know the person and have experience with them. We knew that Naava was very reliable. Betty pointed out that Naava was already doing the lion’s share of the bookkeeping, because the garden was by far our most expensive project; not having to liaise with another person might make her work easier.

Stacy reported that QuickBooks normally cost \$36 per month for one user, but it was currently offering half-price for the first three months.

Motion: The Board approved the President’s nomination of Naava Koenigsberg as Treasurer of the Gila Native Plant Society and agreed to fulfil her conditions. Board members signed a letter for banking purposes confirming the appointment.

The meeting was adjourned at 3:30 pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Betty Spence
Secretary, Gila Native Plant Society