



## **Board Meeting Minutes, Wednesday, January 21, 2026, 2:00 pm**

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

### **Called to order at 2:00 pm.**

**Present:** Donna Stevens, President; Cara Staab, Vice-President; Naava Koenigsberg, Treasurer; Betty Spence, Secretary; Margie Gibson, Past President; Marty Eberhardt, Elroy Limmer, Ceci McNicoll, David Phillips, Sheila Williams

**Absent:** Carol Martin

**Additions to Agenda:** None

**Approval of Minutes:** The minutes of the Board meeting of November 11, 2025, were approved.

### **Unfinished and General Business**

**Volunteer Coordinator Update:** Donna reminded the Board that on January 19<sup>th</sup>, on the unanimous recommendation of the hiring committee (Donna Stevens, Cara Staab, Naava Koenigsberg, Marty Eberhardt), the Board had completing voting to approve the hiring of Margaret Madsen as the Volunteer Coordinator on a contract basis. She had not yet notified Margaret or the two candidates not hired.

Marty said that she had told the candidates that the Volunteer Coordinator would be supervised by both Donna and herself, since the duties included the Silva Creek Botanical Garden as well as other GNPS activities. Perhaps we should update and adjust the descriptions of volunteer tasks in the “Help Us” section of the website.

### **Board and Committee Reports**

**Silva Creek Botanical Garden Steering Committee Report:** Prior to the meeting, Marty had circulated the following Steering Committee report for January 2026:

“It’s a short report this time! Since the last report:

- Naava and I are working on the final report for the Trails Plus grant, which is due 2/1/26.

- Naava and I have participated for the garden on the hiring committee for the volunteer coordinator.
- Elroy heroically fixed the shade sail, which the wind had partially blown down.

In 2026, we'll be working on the Front Yard Garden. Margie is the lead for this effort. I'll be working on setting up a docent training program and docent tours, with Naava and the new volunteer coordinator, and putting together a Family Day in July.

In terms of fundraising, Donna and I worked on and received "Round-Up" status at the Silver City Food Co-op. We still don't know our month.

Also, Naava, Donna and I worked on an application to The Gila Community Foundation for up to \$10k in funding for the volunteer coordinator. Contrary to what they told Naava about priorities, we received an email saying that they'd gotten a lot of applications and had narrowed grants to those pertaining to food insecurity, senior services, emergency and essential community services, animal welfare and veterinary clinics, and community health and wellbeing."

When asked whether the Steering Committee was still contemplating a Family Day at the garden in May, Marty said that the thinking was that July would be a better time.

**2025 Financial Report:** Naava presented her Annual Treasurer Report for Calendar Year 2025. She said that it included the fourth quarter report, although there was still some outstanding information to come from our Edward Jones accounts. All the information was available to Board members on the Google Drive.

#### GNPS Income and Expenditures by Project

In response to questions, she explained that under "Administration" the item "Copies" referred to any copies not associated with a specific project and "Small PDF" referred to a program that allowed her to manipulate PDF documents. Under "Education" the pollinator tent referred to the displays of pollinator educational material. In the blue "Excluded" area at the bottom of the first page, \$2,000 was the amount the Board had agreed to transfer from GNPS accounts to SCBG accounts to correct for earlier mistakes. The Herbarium money was just a pass-through.

#### SCBG Income and Expenditures by Project

Naava noted that thanks to grant money and the reimbursement from the Town, we had spent little of the donation funds on the Silva Creek Botanical Garden. Unfortunately, the Town had cut in half what they were willing to pay for our service contract. Marty noted that we had designated funds for all the capital projects, from either grants or fundraising. Jacqui Olea, the Deputy Town Manager, was very supportive of the garden. When the Town chose a new town Manager to fill the vacancy, we should be sure to bring that person to the garden, and we should reach out to the new Mayor as well.

#### Summary of Accounts

Under the “GNPS” accounts, Naava explained that the FFCU savings account held the WNMU herbarium money, which we were simply handling for the herbarium. The FFCU money market account earned practically nothing and should probably be closed. We had transferred \$10,000 from the Edward Jones mutual fund to the Edward Jones money market account to make it more available. The EJ mutual fund was very volatile.

Under the “SCBG” accounts, the Edward Jones money market account earned more than the FFCU money market account. The EJ CD was cashed out when it matured; it had come from a grant and was used for the grant purposes.

Naava explained that she had not been able to put together the 2026 budget yet, because she was still working on the annual report for NPSNM as well as the report for the Trails Plus grant, which was due in February.

### **New Business**

**Give Grandly Volunteer:** Donna reported that the Gila Community Foundation had announced this year’s Give Grandly fundraiser, and we would need to choose a representative.

**Board Retreat – 2026 Budget and Funding Priorities:** Donna explained that our Treasurer thought we needed to have a larger discussion about the budget and our priorities, perhaps in a different setting. The date was set for February 9, 2026, at 1:00 pm. Cara said she would investigate using the Seedboat Gallery for the retreat.

**GNPS Endowment Fund Proposal:** Margie explained her proposal for an endowment fund policy. The account we consider an “endowment” (the Edward Jones mutual fund) was actually an unrestricted fund established back in the 1990s to build a nest egg for the Society’s future. Although volatile, it had done very well over the years, growing from \$6,282 in June 1999 to \$84,110 in September 2025. It had rarely been used. Generally, nonprofit organizations would maintain a reserve equal to twice their annual budget.

She proposed that the Board establish a policy for the fund. She suggested maintaining a balance of \$50,000 and including all or part of the one-year return from the highest-earning mutual fund in the annual budget. Additional funds could be withdrawn for special projects, provided the minimum balance was maintained.

Some of the points raised under discussion were the following: GNPS used to give scholarships on a regular basis to students interested in botany and grants to worthwhile projects by other local organizations. A policy was a good idea, but perhaps the amount to be withdrawn should be decided year by year. It would not be wise to withdraw all of the one-year return, because the capital amount would gradually decrease in value owing to inflation. Many endowment funds or retirement funds called for the withdrawal of a certain percentage each year, such as 4%, and still increased in value. The discussion was tabled to be taken up at the retreat on February 9.

**GNPS Office Space Proposal:** Donna reported that new Board member Ceci McNicoll had made an offer to rent GNPS a portion of the building at 211 N. Texas St. GNPS could use that space for an office, where we would have visibility in the community. We could sell books and hold meetings and some events there. Ceci would rent the space for \$100 per month, including utilities and Internet, and had some furniture we could use. Our new volunteer coordinator could staff the office one or two days a week and GNPS members could sign up to work a short shift each week.

Ceci explained that when the space became vacant when Lois Duffy moved out, she had bought the space and was determined to rent it in a way that would maintain the character of the Art District. She also had in mind that she could get a tax write-off for the difference between the rent she would charge and the market rate. The rent could start at \$100 and after the first year we could decide what was doable. She was offering a part of the space. Two ceramicists had signed up to use a portion of the space, and she was going to see if the Silver City Art Association had an interest as well.

*Ceci withdrew in order to allow the rest of the Board to discuss the offer freely.*

The following points were raised: Renting a portion of the space would raise our exposure in the community. However, we had few things to sell and would not earn enough to cover the monthly rent, even at the generous starting rate of \$100, and the rent might increase. We did not have the wherewithal to organize attendance at the office. The Volunteer Coordinator already had plenty of responsibilities, and we had many calls for volunteers to do other things. There might be a conflict of interest in paying rent to a Board member. Ceci apparently had other options to fill the space.

**The Board decided not to rent the partial space at 211 N. Texas St., with 8 yes votes and one no vote.**

**The meeting was adjourned at 3:40 pm.**

Respectfully submitted,

Betty Spence, Secretary  
Gila Native Plant Society

## **Appendix 1: Decisions and actions taken by exchange of emails since November 11, 2025**

- November 22, 2025: The Board voted to add Sheila Williams to the slate of candidates for Board Members at Large with term of office beginning January 1, 2026.
- November 24, 2025: GNPS sent out an email to members with the online ballot for the election of Board Members at Large and approval of proposed amendments to the Bylaws.
- December 23, 2025: The Board decided to hold monthly Board meetings on the third Wednesday of the month beginning January 21, 2026.
- December 24, 2025: Polls closed on the elections of the Board Members at Large and amendments to the Bylaws. Cara Staab, Vice-President, reported that those members responding voted unanimously to elect the slate of Board Members at Large as submitted to them (see appendix) and the proposed amendments to the Bylaws (<https://gilanps.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/11/Bylaws-Revised-2025.pdf> )
- January 19, 2026: On the unanimous recommendation of the hiring committee (Donna Stevens, Cara Staab, Naava Koenigsberg, Marty Eberhardt), the Board voted to approve the hiring of Margaret Madsen as the Volunteer Coordinator on a contract basis.

## **Appendix 2: Bios of candidates for Board Member at Large**

### **Marty Eberhardt**

A retired botanical garden director, Marty is a current board member and is active with the Silva Creek Botanical Garden Steering Committee. In her retirement she has published two novels and has others in the works. She volunteers with the Forest Service as an archaeological site steward and a riparian monitor.

### **Elroy Limmer**

Elroy Limmer is a retired arborist. He served as GNPS President for several terms and for many years was the volunteer manager of our Silva Creek Botanical Garden. He is a current board member and serves on the garden Steering Committee. His photographs are featured in our publications and publicity efforts.

### **David Phillips**

A retired Professor of English, David has volunteered with the Silver City Museum and is a former part-time staff member at the Silver City Visitor Center. A current board member, he also serves as the Gila Chapter representative on the NPSNM board and is a member of the 2026 NPSNM state conference planning committee. He and his wife, Terri, foster agave plants on their property to support nectar-feeding bats. He enjoys hiking, camping, and photography.

### **Carol Martin**

Carol Martin worked on habitat restoration for the National Park Service and California State Parks, where the importance of native species became evident to her. She conducted field surveys for the Natural History Museum and San Diego State University Extension. At Torrey Pines State Preserve, she led a 5-year wetland lagoon restoration project, guiding more than 100 volunteers in invasive plant removal and planting natives. After moving to the edge of Silver City in 2004, she and her husband Richard volunteered to build trails for the Continental Divide Trail and planted agaves in a partnership between the Gila Native Plant Society and Bat Conservation International. For several years, Carol was a valued member of the Gila River Festival planning committee.

### **Cecilia McNicoll**

Cecilia McNicoll has a robust ecological background with an MS in Forest/Fire Ecology. For 25 years, she worked for the US Forest Service throughout the western states, retiring from the Gila National Forest in 2006. She absolutely loves native plants, especially penstemons and milkweeds. Her dream is to start a native plant nursery and spend all her time growing and sharing native plants. She has been a member of the Gila Native Plant Society for several years and looks forward to the opportunity to contribute more to this important organization.

**Sheila Williams**

While attending WNMU for a B.S. in Botany (1990-1995), Sheila's professional career began as a research assistant (1992-1994) for Jack Carter on the first edition of his book, *Trees and Shrubs of New Mexico*. This experience led to her work in land management for the Bureau of Land Management and Forest Service, including vegetation management, rare plant guidance, planning for conservation of rare species, and native seed collection for long term storage and restoration. Sheila retired in 2020 in Silver City with her husband Owen and two pups, and enjoys birding, rockhounding, gardening, and hiking and exploring the Gila.