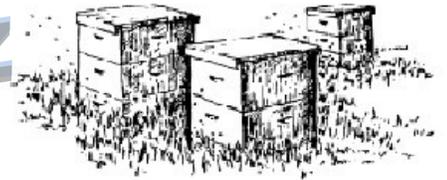




# Fort Bend Buzz

newsletter of the  
Fort Bend Beekeepers Association

*fostering safe, responsible, successful beekeeping*



March, 2019

The March 12, 2019 meeting of the Fort Bend Beekeepers Association will be held at 7:00 pm in Fort Bend County's "Bud" O'Shieles Community Center, 1330 Band Rd., Rosenberg, Texas. Visitors (and new members) are always welcome. Membership dues are \$5.00 for the calendar year (dues are a real bargain if you join early in the year).

The Association provides coffee and lemonade for meeting refreshments if someone will volunteer to make it and clean up afterwards. It is important that we leave the Community Center the way we found it! Please lend a hand in straightening up the tables and chairs and cleaning up the refreshment area. We will be called to order at 7:30 after 30 minutes of social time. Don't forget about the *letgo* table in the back of the room. You may find just what you need or get rid of stuff (beekeeping treasures) that needs a new home.

## Ask a dozen beekeepers...

Here is this month's **Q** (from one of our members) and an **A**:

**Q:** The Texas legislature is in session so it must be time for the biennial bee law brouhaha in Austin. What's up?

**An A:** The Texas legislature meets every other year. In 2019, the 86th regular session runs from January 8 to May 27. Be reminded that in Austin they say that if you don't have a seat at the table, you may end up on the menu.

Bills are introduced in either the House of Representatives or the Senate. If they are passed in both, they go to the governor for his signature. Once signed by the governor a bill becomes law on the effective date stated in the bill.

Legislation is proposed by one (or more) of the 31 state Senators or 150 state Representatives. Sometimes bills are introduced concurrently with identical wording in both the House and Senate versions. The halls in Austin are crawling with special interests looking for someone to introduce their bright ideas for new Texas law. Once again this year, there are several bills that should be of interest to beekeepers (more may be on the way).

The first bill(s) to show up in the hopper were offered concurrently

(HB 1723 and SB 677). Current law says that you must have a permit to cross Texas county lines transporting bees. This provision of the Texas Agriculture Code is an outdated remnant from a decades-ago effort to control American Foulbrood, the highly contagious bacterial disease that really and truly threatened honey bee survival. This provision, in effect, provided for county quarantines. SECTION 131 BEEKEEPING in the Texas Agriculture Code contains this and lots of other incredible detail related to AFB control, as well as draconian enforcement measures. The fact is that for all the problems associated with honey bees and other pollinators today, American Foulbrood is hardly on the list.

All of Section 131 should be rewritten and the Texas Beekeepers Association is making their third attempt at it in 2019 (HB 2670).

"Beekeeper" will be changed to include all beekeepers who "may" register annually with the Texas Apiary Inspection Service (and pay a registration fee). It is unclear what this is all about. I guess you can see this as a donation to TAIS or perhaps the "beekeeper" fees could replace the intrastate movement permit fees (which remains in the Code under this bill).

Here is a weird one for you. HB 2484 seeks to establish a "Bee Pol-

linator Goals Task Force". Its members are to be appointed by the governor from a list of 12 State agencies (there are no members outside of government). This new bureaucracy is supposed to develop measures and metrics and submit an annual report "on the factors contributing to the decline of the bee population". Two things seem strange: There is considerable evidence that bees aren't actually in decline, but I guess if you get to define the metrics.... Also, the bill is all about "bee pollinators" while the code defines "bee" as the honey bee (*A. mellifera*) and "pollinator" is not defined (?). It is hard to see what this feel-good bill will actually accomplish. Maybe they will rewrite Section 131 of the AGRICULTURE CODE?

If you have or seek to have beekeeping valuation for property taxes, you may be interested in HB 97. State law allows 5 to 20 acres of land to be deemed in agricultural use if used to "raise or keep bees". HB 97 is about establishing GUIDELINES FOR UNCOMMON AGRICULTURAL USES. It isn't clear if beekeeping use is "uncommon".

The web site capitol.texas.gov lets you search for terms in bills before the legislature. "Apiary" or "bee" or "beekeeping" led the way to these three bills that are already in the hopper.

## February Meeting Notes

We had 47 members and guests sign in at our February meeting. The head count was 48. Was it you that forgot to sign in? Always register at our meetings since the sign-in sheets are an important record of our use of county facilities.

Club Vice-President Danessa Yaschuk opened the meeting by leading us in the Pledge of Allegiance followed by an invocation by Michael McLean. Danessa then welcomed all present and gave those attending for the first time an opportunity to introduce themselves.

Danessa and several other members attended the Austin Area Beekeepers Association Seminar in January. She reported that it was a good event. Danessa also represented our club at the TBA Winter Delegates Meeting on Saturday in Conroe.

Our Mentoring Program will be getting underway next month. Anyone who is interested in being in the program and having a mentor is asked to put their name and info on the List at the sign-in table. The cost is \$25 and the mentee will receive The Beekeepers Handbook and a beekeepers journal. Another good learning opportunity for both new and not so new beekeepers is the Central Texas Beekeepers Association's one day Beekeeping School on March 23rd in Brenham. You can learn more and register at [centraltexasbeekeepers.org](http://centraltexasbeekeepers.org).

Harrison Rogers updated us on the Bee Exhibit at the Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo. The dates for this year are February 25th through March 17th and there are two shifts each day. Four volunteers are needed for each shift. Though this event is headed up by the Harris County Beekeepers Association, the volunteers are from all the area associations. Harrison's poster-size calendar had quite a few FBBA names on it before the meeting ended. You can also sign up online at [\[ers.org\]\(http://ers.org\) and click on the blue box that says "HLS&R Bee Exhibit." Harrison also spoke of TBA's Real Texas Honey™ program which promotes 100% Texas honey. \(\[realtexashoney.com\]\(http://realtexashoney.com\)\)](http://harriscountybeekeep-</a></p></div><div data-bbox=)

Gene DeBons urged anyone who is interested in collecting swarms and retrieving swarm traps to sign up on the list for 2019. If you are going to participate you need to have the woodware ready to house the colony. Because swarms can fly away at any moment, time is of the essence; if you don't answer Gene's call, he'll move on to the next name. It's also important to decline the swarm if you are unable to collect it within a few hours.

Gene said he's frequently asked what types of flowers a beekeeper should plant for their bees. The fact is, it probably doesn't matter that much when you consider the bees' forage area. Honey bees easily cover a 2 mile radius of their hive. A 2 mile circle contains 8,042 acres or more than 350 million square feet. Though it is always good to plant trees and flowers the bees love, the beekeeper's yard is insignificant when you consider how much area bees forage.

Ian Kjos demonstrated the types of hive bottom boards and telescopic covers he makes and has available for sale. His telescopic covers can be purchased with or without insulating foam board inserts.

Jeff McMullan gave a presentation on the hive design choices that beekeepers face. Most important is that removable frames are required by law across the U. S. since it allows the hive to be inspected for pests and disease. The concept of "bee space" described by Rev. L. L. Langstroth makes removable frames possible.

Jeff then went over five different hive design choices that he has seen beekeepers in our area use. The most often used are top bar hives and Langstroth hives.

Top bar hives were originally developed for subsistence farmers in

Africa. There are no standard dimensions and natural comb is built without foundation.

The Langstroth hive is by far the most common hive design in the U. S. Dimensions are relatively consistent between sources so frames of brood and honey can be moved between hives.

The door prize drawings were held for a few very nice items. Thanks to the donors and congratulations to the lucky winners. To donate a door prize, simply bring it to the meeting and place it on the table at the head of the room.

## Mentors Needed!

Guess what it takes to have a club mentoring program: mentors. We've seen the most success from mentoring teams. The mentor only needs a year or two of beekeeping under their belt plus the desire to lead a small group as they learn more about keeping bees as a team.

## Treasurer's Report

Our February treasury balance was \$3,667.92. Since then we collected \$95.00 in dues (19 new and renewing members). There were no expenses since last month's report, so the resulting balance is \$3,762.92, consisting of \$3,712.92 in our checking account plus \$50.00 in cash to make change.

**TEXAS A&M  
AGRI LIFE  
EXTENSION**

*Boone Holladay*

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