

Mountain Empire Beekeepers Association

Minutes

January 28, 2016

President Tim Service called the meeting to order at 7:00 pm, Thursday, January 28, 2015, in Room 201, Galax Hall, Wytheville Community College. Twenty members and six prospective members attended.

Minutes of the November meeting were reviewed. Harry Joe Yates moved, and Gaynell Shawver seconded, to approve the minutes as posted on the MEBA website. Motion passed.

Treasurer's Report: A report covering November and December 2015 was presented. The balance on hand when new treasurer Mick Cunningham signed for the account was \$3,971.51. There were questions about the annual expenditures and the bank service charge. The report was filed for audit.

Old Business:

- Bulk sugar purchase. Clyde King reported that Dutch Pantry in Rural Retreat may be competitive in pricing for less-than-commercial grade sugar purchases. He will check to get pricing for bulk purchase. Tina Cunningham reported that no one had contacted Mick to purchase bulk sugar through the Galax Wal-Mart as was discussed at the December meeting. The arrangement with Wal-Mart was that members who want to purchase bulk sugar should send a check, made out to MEBA, for \$10/25 pound bag to Mick Cunningham, 155 Bear Tree Lane, Troutdale, VA 24378. A complete pallet of sugar must be ordered.

New Business:

- Tim reported talking with Alethea Neal, Board of Directors at the Wytheville Farmers Market. WFM is interested in having a Honey Day on the third Saturday of each month, beginning in May. They would provide us with a booth for educating customers about bees and pollinators. There was a general consensus that members would be interesting in participating. Clyde King mentioned that the Rural Retreat Farmers Market which is held on Wednesdays, is also interested in having honey vendors and educational exhibits on bees and pollinators.
- Carroll County High School shop produces woodenware for sale. Contact Alan Webb, 276-733-7571, to order.
- Tim Holt can supply all the nucs we need for \$115. He has 5,000 hives in local bee yards. Contact: Tim Holt, 132 Holts LN, Siloam, NC 27047, 336-710-4904.
- Our monthly raffle was discussed; currently we provide a raffle ticket for every meeting attendee and give out 2-3 prizes (hive tools, gloves, frames, etc.) purchased by MEBA. Discussion about whether to charge \$1 for a ticket and provide more costly prizes. No action taken. Information on MEBA finances and expenditures are needed to take further action.

Bees in the News:

- Tim showed a YouTube video by Paul Stamets on Varroa control using mushrooms.
- A new EPA report on neonicotinoids reports that fruits trees are more toxic to bees, with vegetables, corn and berries being less toxic.
- Whistleblower lawsuit: Jonathan Lundgren, an entomologist for USDA filed a report on neonicotinoids' effect on milkweed and Monarch butterflies. He was subsequently fired from his job.

What We Should Be Doing in the Next Month

- When the weather is warm (above 45 degrees), get into your hives; feed fondant or dry sugar.
- Making fondant: Tim adds pollen to his fondant to provide a source of protein and to stimulate queens to lay. If you don't harvest pollen, pollen patties (Ultra-B) are available from Mann Lake as a pollen substitute. This is the time to start feeding pollen.
- Fondant recipe: see bamboohollow.com for a detailed fondant recipe with helpful tips on making fondant.
- Assembling and repairing equipment: get your equipment ready for the new season because you won't have time once the bees get active.

"Deadouts" (dead hives): take care of them right away. Perform a frame by frame "autopsy" to try to figure out what killed the colony. If you think it was disease, you can send a sample to Beltsville for analysis. Clean up the old frame, and store what's still good to use.

Bee Biology: Tim presented information on the honey crop and showed how nectar is sucked into the expandable crop. the proventriculus is the valve that stops nectar from going into the stomach. [Bee biology will be a topic at each meeting.]

Programming Brainstorming: Tim led the group in brainstorming for program ideas, speakers, etc., during the coming year. Ideas for presentations were:

- Top bar hives
- Integrated Pest Management, in particular Varroa mite treatment
- Monthly discussion on what you should be doing with your hives in the coming month
- Taking care of equipment
- Flow hives
- Presentation by Brian Kreowski
- Richard Fell, head of the bee yard at Va Tech on the bee dance and how bees communicate
- Plants and flowers; Suzanne Slack, Carroll County Extension Agent; Richard Townes, VP Wilkes Comm. Coll. & horticulturist
- Pat Haskell & husband
- Honey tasting in October
- Extracting & processing honey
- Visit to Black Snake Meadery
- Producing value-added products such as soap, candles, lotions, etc.
- Making wood ware

Announcements:

Dues for 2016 membership will be collected at the February meeting; cash or check, please. Dues are \$11 local membership, \$20 local and state membership.

Raffle: a raffle for a hive tool, gloves, and two pollen patties was held at the end of the meeting.

Meeting adjourned at 8:35 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Tina Cunningham

Secretary, MEBA