

Mountain Empire Beekeepers Association

Minutes

DRAFT September 26, 2019

The meeting was called to order at 6:30 p.m. by Anthony Ellis in room 201, Galax Hall Wytheville Community College. 20 members present.

Minutes and Treasurer's Report: Motion to approve minutes—Gary Tolley, seconded by Herman Hearn. Minutes approved. Gary Tolley presented the treasurers report. The report was filed for audit.

Speaker: Anthony Ellis

Presentation: 14 Ideas to Take Your Honey Business to the Next Level

1. **Create the ultimate package.** Check out Pinterest for honey label ideas. Check out the Bottlestore.com.
2. **Start a honey club.** If you are experienced in online sales, consider setting up your own honey club. This can be a great way to promote different varieties of honey and honey-related products to existing customers. Keeping mailing list addresses or emails to market new products and let people sign up to received select honey products once a month for personal use, or as a gift.
3. **Create some buzz.** If you set up a roadside stand or space in a local farmer's market, take an empty hive and set it up or an observation hive. This would be a great way to show people who may not have ever seen a beehive up close. Educate them on beekeeping. You may even get new members to join your local bee organization. Create a swarm around your stand!
4. **Be promotionally daring.** The next time you plan to sell your honey in public, dare to be a little different. Don a bee suit or bring it for people to see. Little creative twists can be a big draw for new customers who can ultimately become a loyal customer. One beekeeper in China once covered his entire body with live bees just to sell more honey.
5. **Teach what you know.** There are lots of people who are interested in the process of making and bottling honey. Be willing to talk to groups such as scout troops, schools, and others to teach them more about the art of beekeeping, honey extraction, and bottling. Provide opportunities for homeschooled children to learn more about biology and science. Teach special classes in making beeswax crafts for extra cash. You can draw in new customers to your honey business using new avenues.
6. **Expand Your horizons.** Besides honey, bees also make wax which can be a profit-making product as well. There are a number of popular products made out of beeswax, which can be sold right alongside your honey. Lotions, lip balms, and candles will all become a strong part of your inventory. Learn how to make these additional products and start building a solid brand.
7. **Promote the interesting.** Honey is used in many do-it-yourself recipes for health care. Research some easy recipes when honey is a chief ingredient (facial masks, hair conditioners) and make samples for friends. The samples, as well as a copy of each recipe, are treat handouts to promote the versatility of honey.
8. **Tout the good.** Raw honey is a natural remedy for many of ailments. Be sure to advertise the fact your honey is produced locally, contains no preservatives, and is a versatile product for better health.
9. **Promote online.** There are a number of places you can advertise honey sales online. Social media websites, ebay and Craigslist are all viable ways to sell to people outside of your immediate area. Many of these online avenues are free or low-cost. Consistency will help keep your propducts in front of the consumer and can help you build a loyal following.
10. **Start consigning.** You'll have better luck asking for consignment opportunities among other small business owners. Small convenient stores, boutiques and other small venues may sell your honey products in-house for a fee. Some businesses may charge a flat-rate-fee each month or will consign based on a percentage of sales. The store may want to purchase your products for resale.

11. **Offer free giveaways.** Have a free giveaway at church or organization that you are a member of to help people remember your honey. Give away free trail samples if possible.
12. **Markets, Festival and Fairs-** During the spring, summer and fall you can find several places to sell your honey and products. Farmers markets are popping up in almost every community. You have festivals and fairs during different times of the year. Ask to be a vendor. In some communities you can even set up a road side stand.
13. **Donate your product.** There are many opportunities in your community where someone is having a fundraiser. Donate a jar of your honey or other products made from your bee business. This is a good way for people to see your product and know who you are!
14. **Word of mouth-** If you've been gifting friends and loved ones with honey for birthdays or holidays, start a conversation about your honey. Let them know that you are selling your honey, and ask them to spread the word about your honey. Word of mouth advertising goes a long way!

Old Business:

- Membership dues – Only about half of the membership dues have been paid. This notice has been put in the minutes to remind everyone to please pay as soon as possible if you have not done so already. If you are not sure if you have or not, see Gary Tolley. If you are ready to pay, see Gary Tolley as well. Our calendar year starts over January of every year.
- A motion was made by Gary Tolley to have the treasure's report presented quarterly instead of every monthly meeting. Cathy Hounshell seconded the motion.
- Anthony Ellis asked everyone to give their thoughts about the dinner meeting with Jude Colt, should we decide to do this again next year, to consider moving the meeting up an hour so that she would not be getting home so late. Possibly having the meeting at Jude Colts farm was discussed, and possibly on a Saturday during the day was discussed as well.
- Mickey Cunningham made a motion to have a meeting during 2020-2021 with George Isom presenting on how to get your honey ready for a honey show. The month of April was suggested as a possible good month for this presentation. George Isom has exhibited honey in the London honey show and is responsible for helping start the Virginia honey show as well. The motion was 2nd by Connie Armentrout.
- **On November 21, 2019 MEBA cannot meet in Galax Hall. For this meeting only, we will be moving back to Smyth Hall room 122.**
- Herman Hearn announced that there is a new book on beekeeping in the library.
- Herman Hearn also announced that Omega Printing in Hillsville was less expensive than Avery labels. There is a \$5.00 set up fee.
- Eural Clippard shared the mite treatment article from American Bee Journal magazine 1997 entitled Tracheal Mites, Menthol, and Shop Towels by Don Jackson . Eural explained the menthol is dissolved in canola oil. This should be done in Septmeber after you get honey off and the temperature starts to cool. Bees don't seem to get resistant to this treatment. Put the mentol and oil in a metal paint can, **never plastic**.
- Anthony Ellis asked if anyone would be interested in presenting on creamed honey in the future.

New Business:

- Cathy Hounshell shared that she will be teaching the beekeeping class starting February 4 and running for 5 weeks. The room has been reserved for 6 weeks if needed due to inclement weather. Permission was asked from the club to increase the cost of the class from \$43.00 to \$45.00. This would include the cost to cover raffle items for one raffle per week. The motion was made by Eural Clippard, seconded by Gary Tolley and the motion was approved.
- A motion was made to have a notice placed in the American Bee Journal in the news & events section to advertise the beekeeping class. Gary Tolley made the motion and Johnathan Wright seconded the motion. The motion was approved.

Hive Report: What Should You Be Doing with Your Hives?

Check for Mites & treat when necessary

Check bees

Replace bad queens

Check your batteries for your electric fence

Buy pollen patties or make your own if you do not see much pollen in the hive

Raffle Winners:

Ronnie Osbourne – 10 Medium Unassembled Frames

Theresa Hearn – 12 One Pound Muth Honey Jars

John Todd – Medium Wax Foundation

John Todd – Hive Tool

Anita Parks – Uncapping Knife

Ronnie Dillman – Hive Top Board

Harry Joe Yates – Cedar Entrance Reducer

Next Meeting: October 24, 2019 in Galax Hall WCC

Adjourned at 8:33 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Connie Armentrout, MEBA Secretary