



Save Georgia's Hemlocks

11-8-09 Meeting Notes

A quarterly Board meeting was held Sunday, November 8 at 4:00 p.m. at the home of Donna Shearer, 37 Woody Bend, Dahlonega. The meeting was open to all interested parties. In attendance: Bob Pledger, Joel Longstreet, Jimmie Walters, Rob Strangia, and Donna Shearer.

Review and signing of organizing documents

All four documents were reviewed and signed by all Board members and are ready for Donna to submit to the IRS with the Application for Exempt Recognition (form 1023). She will also submit the Articles of Incorporation and Data Transmittal Form 227 to the Secretary of State's Office and post the required Notice of Intent to Incorporate in the Dahlonega Nugget. All will be submitted during the week of November 9, 2009.

- **Articles of Incorporation**
- **Bylaws** – A unanimous vote was recorded to make the fiscal year December 1 through November in order to allow time to prepare drafts of the annual statements for review at the January quarterly meeting.
- **Conflict of Interest Policy** – A unanimous vote to approve this policy was recorded. A possible conflict of interest was disclosed by Donna Shearer. Her husband Mark Shearer has a commercial business, Hemlock Doctor, that treats Hemlocks all over north Georgia for the woolly adelgid. This relationship is disclosed on the Contacts page of the web site, and his business is presented equally with four other professionals on that same page for the benefit of individuals who need or prefer a professional level of service instead of the DIY option. The Board voted unanimously (with Donna Abstaining) that no conflict of interest exists.
- **Donor Privacy Policy** – A unanimous vote to approve this policy was recorded.

Election of officers

Election of officers this time was done by individuals choosing the role they want to play starting now and continuing through November 30, 2010. It is expected that actual elections will be held next November.

- Chairman Donna Shearer
- Vice Chairman Bob Pledger
- Treasurer Joel Longstreet
- Secretary Rob Strangia

Jimmie Walters indicated she would be willing to head up a Marketing and Membership Committee as soon as she is freed up from some other tasks she's currently engaged in.

Review of financial condition and accomplishments to date

The Progress Report as of November 9, 2009 contains both financial information and activity report.

- **Finances:** Currently, our ratio of charitable/educational expenditures to general overhead are about 95% : 5%. These proportions will change to about 75% : 25% after we pay the fees associated with filing the Articles of Incorporation, posting the Notice of Intent to Incorporate, and filing the Application for Exempt Recognition, but we will still be well within acceptable levels defined by Charity Navigator, and the change will be temporary.

- **Activity:** To date, many of the activities have been carried out by Donna, but the group desires to migrate toward a model that shares responsibilities among Board members, Facilitators, and community volunteers.

Discussion of goals, objectives, and future projects

- **More counties** – The Hemlock Help for Homeowners program is currently implemented in 7 counties. In early spring of 2010, the Hemlock Help for Homeowners program will be implemented in additional north Georgia counties spring – Whitfield, Murray, and Pickens – with the goal of staying on the leading edge of the HWA infestation as it spreads.
- **More clinics** -- We will continue to raise awareness and advocate for action through Hemlock Help Clinics in both new and currently implemented counties. We will also actively seek opportunities to present the HWA issue to groups that are non-resident but have an interest in preserving the Hemlock as a key factor in the aesthetic quality, environmental balance, and economic health of the north Georgia area.
- **More enabling** -- We will place (or facilitate placement of) additional soil injectors in north Georgia counties as demand rises, will encourage and assist more retail outlets to carry HWA treatment products in order to increase availability, and will train more Facilitators in each county to assist individuals and groups in managing the health of their Hemlocks.
- **More education** -- We will continue to do research on the HWA problem and solutions, participate in citizen science initiatives, publish timely information from a wide variety of serious sources as it becomes available, and encourage citizens to become more knowledgeable of and exercise greater stewardship over the natural environment.
- **More service** -- We will work to foster partnerships to advocate for and support community action, build a strong core of volunteers and provide meaningful opportunities through which they may become involved, and serve as an organizational structure for assisting private land owners and public land managers in special Hemlock Help projects.
- **More sharing** -- We will develop a funding strategy that assists us to draw financial and functional support from a broad community base of individuals and organizations, enables us to carry out specific Hemlock Help objectives, and allows us to share our resources charitably with others in support of our common goals. This topic will be a major focus of the January quarterly meeting.

Discussion of needs

- **Spreading the word** – We will seek more individuals and organization to help spread the word to friends, neighbors, and business associates through word of mouth and any e-mail lists, newsletters, bulletin boards, or web site they have access to. We may also consider other marketing avenues but want to keep costs to a minimum. Three key messages are:
 - The Hemlocks are in trouble and will die unless effective action is taken soon.
 - Homeowners can save as many of their Hemlocks as they want, and it's easy and inexpensive.
 - Save Georgia's Hemlocks can provide a great deal of practical help.
- **Helping others** – We will encourage more individuals to become Facilitators by learning more about the HWA problem and solutions and then being available to help their neighbors identify/assess HWA infestations, understand/choose appropriate control options, and find the right resources to get started.
- **Supporting the effort** – In addition to funds freely donated at Hemlock Help Clinics, we will consider other fund-raising strategies as soon as we receive tax exempt status from the IRS. We also want to consider appropriate ways to share our resources with others. These two aspects of financial strategy will be a major focus for next quarterly meeting.

Next quarterly meeting

Next quarterly meeting is proposed for Sunday, January 17, 2010 at 4:00 p.m. Location and agenda will be announced at least two weeks in advance.