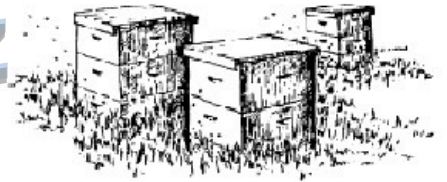




# Fort Bend Buzz

newsletter of the

Fort Bend Beekeepers Association



January, 2015

The Fort Bend Beekeepers Association meets on the second Tuesday of the month (except December) 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). Our first meeting for 2015 will be Tuesday, January 13. The Association provides coffee and lemonade for meeting refreshments while members volunteer to bring snacks.

## Ask a dozen beekeepers...

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

**Q:** What is the scoop on property tax exemption for beekeeping?

**An A:** Property taxes are assessed based on either its market value or, under specific circumstances, its use. Lower taxable value means a lower tax bill. In 2011 the Texas legislature passed (and the governor signed) a law making beekeeping an agricultural use for open space property tax appraisal. A landowner's tax liability may be significantly reduced by this statute since land's taxable value as "bee pasture" would likely be far less than its market value. Since each appraisal district interprets the statute independently, you should visit with the agricultural-use appraiser at your Central Appraisal District for a definitive answer to your question. Here are a few basic facts that can help guide your conversation.

Land qualifies for this property tax treatment when it is used to "raise or keep bees for pollination or for the production of human food or other tangible products". The law states that the food or products must have commercial value, but must not necessarily be sold commercially. Further, the landowner can lease property for beekeeping, so actually owning or managing bee hives is not required.

The statute limits this valuation to property of five to twenty acres. If the property includes a homestead, one acre is usually attributed to the home site. If the total acreage minus the homestead is less than five acres, it is ineligible for beekeeping valua-

tion. A maximum of 20 acres, comes under this exemption, so only a portion of larger tracts can be appraised for beekeeping. Each appraisal district sets how many hives are necessary, depending on the size of the tract and the area's climate and resources. The taxable value of property appraised for beekeeping is calculated based on the commercial value of its potential honey production.

Property currently in agricultural use can be appraised for beekeeping. If property is taxed at its market value, it must have been in agricultural use for five years before it's taxable value can be lowered. Appraisal districts require records of some form to make this conversion. Also understand that ag-use taxation is a deferral and if property loses its agricultural exemption, five years of back taxes come due.

## November Meeting Notes

Fifty-one members and guests signed the roster at our last meeting for 2014. Members donated 22 door prizes for the meeting so Christmas came early for lots of beekeepers. Thanks to the donors and congratulations to the winners.

Sharon Moore provided handouts and led a discussion about her attempts to legalize hobbyists who produce honey and sell the surplus. The Texas Cottage Food Law seemed at first look to be the proper place to include honey, although it was not part of the original law in 2011. The law covered home-prepared foods that are not considered "potentially hazardous" in-

cluding such things as baked goods, candy, nuts, herbs, cucumber pickles, mustard, etc. It excluded any food that required refrigeration after preparation. Other aspects of the Cottage Food Law include requirements to obtain a food handler's permit from a state accredited program and to label the food as prepared in a home kitchen. Individuals must sell the product personally; internet, mail order or third-party sales aren't allowed under the law. The Texas Beekeeper's Association believes a stand-alone bill is needed for the hobby beekeeper and passed a resolution to that affect at its annual meeting in November. The TBA Legislative Committee is pursuing a law similar to the one in Oklahoma.

Ray Smaistrila introduced Bruce Davis, who presented a detailed program on home mead making. The basic requirements are honey, water and yeast, but those are only the basics. Bruce provided a 7-page handout covering all aspects of mead making, including specific directions for Dry Mead, Medium Mead and Sweet Mead. He patiently answered questions from the audience concerning sources of yeast and yeast nutrients.

The meeting closed with a couple of important announcements (see the related articles). Our second annual Super Painting Contest will be in March 2015. Also, officer elections will be held in January. Both President and Vice-President incumbents will be leaving their posts. Members interested in any of the officer slots should volunteer as soon as possible.

## Treasurer's Report

Our November, 2014 balance was \$3,439.46. Since that time we spent \$440.97 to renew our web site registration and hosting for three years and \$15.15 for a pin uncapper to add to our extracting setup. Our treasury balance is \$2,983.34, consisting of \$50.00 in cash (to make change) plus a Wells Fargo checking account balance of \$2,933.34.

A financial summary and property inventory for 2014 is presented at right. The main highlights are the \$854.81 in donations and the public address system that we bought for our meetings and outreach events.

## Super Painting Contest

Our Second Annual Super Painting Contest will be judged at our March meeting. Decorated shallow or medium supers (8 or 10 frame) can be entered in one of three categories: KIDS (through 12 years), TEENS (age 13 to 19), and ADULTS (20 and older). Winners will be determined by member ballot and announced at the meeting. In addition to awards, winners get bragging rights for a whole year.

## Elections

At our November meeting, Gene deBons was appointed to head a nominating committee for the election of officers. Gene will report on the committee's slate of nominees at our January meeting. We will be voting after additional nominations from the floor. If you are interested in serving as an officer, please let Gene know.

## Dues Are Due

Membership dues for the Fort Bend Beekeepers Association are \$5.00 for the calendar year. All member dues for 2015 are now due. Don't forget to stash a five dollar bill in your wallet and get your dues paid at our January meeting.

Our member rosters and mailing lists show who has not yet paid dues by their names being *in italics*. Of course everyone's name is that way at our first meeting of the year, but if you don't get this chore done, your name will show up in dreaded italics on our member roster.

## Refreshments Sign Up and Swarm Call List

Our Association (thanks to B. Bohus) provides coffee and lemonade and members volunteer to bring a snack or dessert to the monthly meetings. At our January meeting, volunteers can sign up to provide refreshments for our 2015 meetings.

We'll also pass around a swarm call list that will be used to direct folks that contact our organization to members that capture swarms or do cutouts or those that want free bees. We'll also use it to find a home for bees trapped as a service to our communities.

### Fort Bend Beekeepers Association 2014 Financial Summary

<b>Opening balance (Jan. 1, 2014)</b>		<b>\$3,411.62</b>
<b>Income</b>		
member dues paid (108 at \$5.00)	\$540.00	
donations	\$854.81	
extracting equipment income	<u>\$60.00</u>	
<b>Total Income</b>		<b>\$1,454.81</b>
<b>Expenses</b>		
meeting door prizes and supplies	(\$192.30)	
HLSR outreach flyers (cost share)	(\$50.00)	
web site renewal and publishing software	(\$482.57)	
super decorating contest	(\$195.79)	
public address system	(\$620.22)	
donated smokers for TBA meeting	(\$186.60)	
18 swarm traps	(\$140.46)	
pin uncapper	<u>(\$15.15)</u>	
<b>Total Expenses</b>		<b>(\$1,883.09)</b>
<b>Ending Balance (Dec. 31, 2014)</b>		<b>\$2,983.34</b>

Note: In 2014 the Association collected (and disbursed) a total of \$5,029.95 for the group purchase of honey bottling containers. The collective purchase shipped to a single address saved our members more than \$1,400.

### Fort Bend Beekeepers Association December 31, 2014 Property Inventory

<u>Description</u>	<u>Date Acquired</u>	<u>Initial Cost</u>	<u>Member Contact</u>
<b>Four Framed Beekeeping Posters</b>	various	unknown	Jeff McMullan
<b>Learning Hive</b>	8/28/2009	\$144.49	Jeff McMullan
<b>Red Wagon</b>	10/16/2009	\$45.98	Jeff McMullan
<b>Extracting Equipment</b>			
Extractor, stand, etc.	8/19/2011	\$583.33	
Pin Uncapper	11/8/2014	<u>\$15.15</u>	
		\$598.48	Jim Lynch
<b>Solar Wax Melter</b>	1/10/2012	donated	Nancy Hentschel
<b>Frame Assembly Gear</b>	3/5/2012	\$157.88	Nancy Hentschel
<b>Outreach Banners</b>	11/7/2013	\$80.96	Jeff McMullan
<b>Public Address System</b>	6/21/2014	\$620.22	Jeff McMullan
<b>18 Swarm Traps</b>	11/3/2014	\$140.46	Jeff McMullan

TEXAS A&M  
AGRI LIFE  
EXTENSION

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Educational programs of the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service are open to all people without regard to race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, disability, genetic information or veteran status. Persons with disabilities who plan to attend this meeting and who may need auxiliary aid or services are required to contact Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service at 281 342-3034 five working days prior to the meeting so appropriate arrangements can be made. The Texas A&M University System, U.S. Department of Agriculture, and the County Commissioners Courts of Texas cooperating.