

## **Lewis County Beekeepers' Association: Minutes of Inaugural Meeting, August 14, 2008**

This first meeting of what we agreed to call the Lewis County Beekeepers' Association (hereafter, LCBA) met at 7:30 p.m. on August 14, 2008 at "Spiffy's." Bob Harris coordinated the meeting. These minutes summarize the discussion and decisions which LCBA's charter members made at this meeting. First, we discussed the logistics of organizing LCBA; then we talked about specifics of beekeeping.

The roster of the 19 charter members, their phone numbers, email addresses, city of residence, and number of hives is attached below, following the meeting minutes.

### Meeting topics:

- \* Why create LCBA?
- \* Goals of LCBA
- \* Monthly Meeting Dates, Times, Place
- \* LCBA Organization: Officers, Nonprofit Status, Dues & Fees, Possible Fundraising, Legal and Liability Issues, and Beekeeping Mentors
- \* Possibilities for Future Talks and Events
- \* LCBA Outreach Opportunities
- \* Miscellaneous Bee Information
- \* Membership Roster and Contact Information

Details of our discussion of each topic follow:

**Why Create LCBA?** Lewis County lacks an organized beekeeping group: the closest is in Olympia. However, as attendance at Bob Harris' "bee symposium" showed, interest in Lewis County is keen. Bob reported that the County and WSU Extension are willing to provide some resources: a \$400 seed grant is in the bank to be spent by the end of December, and the Farm Bureau has contributed \$200. With start-up funds and interested members, the time to start a Lewis County group is now!

**Goals of LCBA:** LCBA will provide information and support to members interested in developing and maintaining bee colonies, both by linking experienced members as "mentors" to beginners and by offering educational programs, workshops, and resources at monthly meetings. When appropriate, LCBA will offer programs and outreach to non-members interested in becoming beekeepers.

**Meeting Dates, Time, Place:** LCBA will meet on the second Wednesday of each month at the WSU County Extension Office in Chehalis, basement floor of the old courthouse, at 7 p.m. We may choose to meet more often in "bee season," early spring to fall. Some workshop-oriented meetings may be "on site" at members' homes; unless otherwise announced, though, meetings will take place at the WSU County Extension office, which has equipment for presentations.

Monthly meetings will run from 90 minutes to two hours and will have two parts: part one will focus on informative presentations by members and invited speakers, as well as "Q&A troubleshooting," and part two will be a business meeting.

**Our next meeting will be Wednesday, September 10<sup>th</sup>, 7 p.m.:** Norm Switzler will speak on removing bees from structures and re-installing them in new structures. At our October meeting, Dave Smith will speak on how to put hives together and extract honey. These talks will be roughly 45 minutes, followed by Q&A, discussion, and the business meeting.

**Organization of LCBA:** Bob called for volunteers, and the following members agreed to serve as officers for 2008-09:

President: Robert Harris  
Vice President: Norm Switzler  
Mentorship Coordinator: Brandy Demelt  
Treasurer: Sarah Roebas  
Secretary: Susanne Weil

***Nonprofit status:*** We agreed that to help us raise funds and be protected from liability, LCBA should incorporate as a 503C nonprofit organization, along the lines of the Lewis County Master Gardeners. Bob Harris and Peter Glover are Master Gardeners and can draw on that model to work on becoming a 503C group. Brandy Demelt has experience in nonprofits and offered to help as well. Bob, Peter, and Brandy will work on this and report on progress at our September 10, 2008 meeting.

***Dues and Fees:*** We decided to table the question of whether to require annual dues until our September meeting. One possibility might be to set dues at \$1 per hive, with a limit of \$5. There will be no starting fee for charter members. However, we did agree that those who join later should pay a reasonable start-up fee to help us raise funds for training, supplies, and outreach. Finally, our fiscal year will start in October and run October to September: officers' terms will also run October to September.

***Possible fundraising:*** The Farm Bureau may be able to help us. We might also petition the state Department of Agriculture. Norm Switzler noted that the Olympia office of Fish and Wildlife, for whom he works, does bee outreach as well and may be able to help with information, if not financially.

***Legal and liability issues:*** The state Department of Agriculture claims dominion over bees. It is illegal to kill bees: beekeepers are supposed to be licensed apiarists with the Department of Agriculture for \$5/year for up to six hives (\$10/year for more hives). Also, apiarists need to be registered with the Department of Agriculture to sell honey. Bob Harris will talk to the head of Pierce County's beekeeping group about these legal details, as well as to Sheila Gray of the WSU Extension.

Also, as part of nonprofit incorporation, we need to investigate how we can become insured to protect from liability (for example, what if an LCBA member were accused of giving bad advice, or if a child were stung at one of our workshops?).

***Beekeeping Mentors (see membership roster, below, for contact information):***  
Bob Harris, Ken Jones, Jason and Heather Sherwood, Dave and Shelley Smith, Norm Switzler, and Gordon Ulmer volunteered to take members' questions as "beekeeping mentors."

**Possibilities for future talks and events:**

\* Bee supplies: Ruhl Bee Supply in Portland would like to partner with LCBA and can help with supplies and acquiring queens. If LCBA members put in a bulk order, John of Ruhl Bee Supply would drive them up here. Also, John and his wife offer monthly classes and might be willing to give a talk at a monthly meeting.

\* Extractors: LCBA could rent or buy an extractor to share among group members. Also, Gordon Ulmer, our member who owns Silvercreek Apiaries, has two extractors and would be willing to loan these to LCBA members.

\* Building hives from scratch: Jason Sherwood is interested in doing a workshop on how to do this. Also, Bob Harris has a wood shop at his farm and would be willing to host a workshop there.

\* Styrofoam vs. wood: Norm Switzler has worked with styrofoam as opposed to wood structures and is interested in sharing details of how that works.

\* "Deeps and shallows": pros and cons.

\* 8 frame vs. 10 frame: pros and cons.

\* "Brood-builder": Dave Smith and Jason Sherwood have used these.

\* Swarms: how to get them—or get rid of them. It would be useful for LCBA members to stay in touch about where swarms are and how to manage them.

\* Selling honey: 5 of our members sell bees and hives (Jason and Heather Sherwood, Gordon Ulmer, and Dave and Shelley Smith). All present were interested in the logistics and legalities of selling honey. Bob Harris noted that it would be possible to sell honey at the Chehalis Farmers' Market, where he now sells eggs from his farm: the market for organic honey exists for those interested in tapping into it.

\* Health issues: eating raw honey has helped some with their allergies.

\* Colony collapse syndrome: a recent PBS documentary covered this and could be bought and loaned within LCBA and/or could be a monthly meeting program.

**Outreach:**

\* Newsletter and webpage? Bob Harris' Rose of Sharon Farm already has a webpage where people can post questions about beekeeping. With help from his wife, Bob might be able to mount a webpage for LCBA as a link from his farm's page.

\* Publicity: Bob Harris is in touch with Centralia *Chronicle* reporter Cathy Hall. Also, Bob will write a column about LCBA for the Master Gardeners' newsletter.

\* On Saturday, September 13, 2008, 9 to 10:30 a.m., Bob Harris will speak on "Every Gardener a Beekeeper" at the Master Gardeners' "Gardening for Everyone" symposium at Centralia College, Washington Hall. Bob's talk will focus on what kinds of plantings encourage bees, as well as basics on starting beekeeping. This event is free to the public. LCBA could distribute fliers at GFE to help bring in new members. Bob Harris and Peter Glover will work on this.

\* Norm Switzler is interested in working with children re: beekeeping.

**Miscellaneous Bee Information:** In addition to the ideas shared while we discussed possible talks for future meetings, much helpful information was offered by the experienced members of the group. Such discussions and Q&A, we agreed, should be a major focus of our monthly meetings. What information the scribe was able to write down is summarized here:

- \* Bob Harris and Peter Glover recommend *Beekeeping for Dummies* as a very good book for beekeepers starting out.

- \* Bob Harris and Norm Switzer have informational materials to share, such as DVDs and books. Bob and several others take *Bee Culture* magazine; one member subscribes to the *American Bee Journal*. Bob will bring issues of *Bee Culture* to our September meeting.

- \* Spring is the time to start hives, but considerable preparation is necessary, so in October and early November, new beekeepers need to start getting materials.

- \* If you start with two hives, that gives wiggle room to move and adapt; however, if you start with just one hive and your queen dies, you are sunk.

- \* “Nukes” = nucleus

- \* What is “organic” honey? In Portland, “organic” is defined as non-pasteurized.

- \* Re: styrofoam: Norm notes that styrofoam hive structures are much easier to lift than wooden ones, and they come with a plastiform frame with good structural integrity. However, they do tend to warp in very hot conditions.

Respectfully submitted,  
Susanne Weil, LCBA Secretary

**(membership roster omitted from online edition)**

