

GCFP 95th Annual Convention
The Alloy Hotel, a DoubleTree by Hilton
301 West DeKalb Pike King of Prussia PA 19406
Minutes of the Annual Business Meeting, April 7-8, 2025

The 95th GCFP Annual Business Meeting was called to order at 8:30 AM at the Alloy, a Double Tree by Hilton in King of Prussia, PA by **GCFP President, Leeanna Ryba**, having been introduced as the Presiding Officer by **Protocol Chair, Haddie Weber**. A quorum was declared.

The **GCFP Chaplin, Margie Wolff**, offered the invocation. The assembly stood for the presentation of colors made by the Color Guard of the Sons of the American Revolution, followed by the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag of the United States led by **1st Vice President, Pat Wolanski**, and the singing of the National Anthem led by **Betty Wist** of Waterford Garden Club in District VIII.

President Ryba thanked District XI for planning the GCFP 95th Annual Convention, "A Gardening Revolution." **District XI Director, Flossie Narducci**, welcomed all to the 95th GCFP Convention and recognized **Convention Chair, Karen Wychock** and her **Co-Chairs, Ginger Hunsicker and Diane Pratt**. The **District VIII Director, Bonita Herman**, thanked District XI for hosting the 2025 Convention, and invited all to attend Erie's 96th Convention, "MYSTerie by the Bay", on April 26-28, 2026 in response to Flossie's welcome.

The **Parliamentarian, Sharon Brown**, read the Convention Rules on page 6 of the program booklet and moved for their adoption. Chris Leskosky motioned, Vina McLeod Rudolph seconded and the assembly voted affirmatively.

Adopted

The **2025 Convention Chair, Karen Wychock**, announced two room changes to the Convention Program: on page 9, Presentation C1 will be held in Steelwork C Room while C2 will be held in Steelwork B room. A motion was made by Karen Wychock, seconded by Judy Schaffer and the assembly voted affirmatively to adopt the Convention Program.

Adopted

The **2025 Convention Registrar, Barbara Stoebenau**, presented the Preliminary Credentials report. *The 312 registrants who paid more than \$5* were NGC President-0, Former NGC President-1, NGC Board Members-9, CAR-SGC Director-0, GCFP State President-1, Former GCFP Presidents-8, District Directors-7, Assistant District Directors-8, Current Club Presidents-32, Current Club Members-297, Guests/Spouses including Donnelly's-15, NGC Life Members-45, CAR-SGC Life Members-31, GCFP Life Members-59, Flower Show Judges-56, Gardening Consultants-27, Environmental Consultants-21 and Landscape Design Consultants-30. *The 25 registrants who paid only \$5* were Club Presidents-2, Garden Club Members-24, Guest/Spouse-1. *There were 73 clubs represented by 1 to 72 members* and, by District, there were the following number of member-attendees: I-63, II/III-32, IV-36, V-12, VI-10, VII-13, VIII-17, IX-4, X-16, XI-107 and FGCM-D-1. There were five attendees in two clubs in different districts and no districts were listed for Guests.

President Ryba introduced the **2023-2025 GCFP Officers**: Patricia Wolanski – President Elect, Tonya Young – 2nd Vice President, Marilyn Backus – Recording Secretary, Vivian Hall – Treasurer, Barbara Brand – Financial Secretary. She also introduced Appointed Officers Flossie Narducci (Corresponding Secretary) and Sharon Brown (Parliamentarian) and Appointed Members Nerita Brant and Nancy Lambert-Fulk.

President Leeanna introduced the **Convention Timekeeper, Maryann DeSanto**. A cell phone ring was the signal to finish reporting, that is, three minutes for district directors and two minutes

for selected committee chairs. She proposed the appointment of the **Committee to Approve the Minutes of the 2025 GCFP Convention, Nerita Brant and Mary Jo Gardill**. Barbara Brand made the motion, it was seconded and the assembly voted its approval.

Adopted

REPORTS OF THE OFFICERS

President Ryba addressed her Board of Directors and the Convention attendees, and reflected that she took satisfaction in knowing that the Garden Club Federation of Pennsylvania (PA) made a difference during her term. Her theme, *PLANT AMERICA, While Keeping PA Beautiful*, was her reaction to seeing litter strewn over the highways in PA. Her hope was to encourage more projects to remove this ugliness from our beautiful countryside. She based her President's Project on litter and recycling projects and was delighted to award the clubs that responded. She hoped every club will have at least one program every year dealing with ways to recycle or eliminate litter. Her Board of Directors was made up of capable people willing to do everything necessary to meet the requirements of their positions. These ladies and gentlemen were and are self-starters, needing no micromanagement. They gave all and asked little. As an organization, we are blessed. President Leeanna thanked everyone for all they have done for the GCFP during her term. At the end of the State President's term, National Garden Clubs requests a report of accomplishments. Her report for PA included the Zoom Leadership Conference for all club Presidents, Club Treasurers and any club member interested in learning more about organizational leadership. The Convention in Lancaster in 2024 included everything, even a solar eclipse! The Gardening Revolution was underway here in Valley Forge. The GCFP continued to thrive financially and was able to help more students through the scholarship program. There were many Blue Star dedications and the first Gold Star Dedication was sponsored by the Somerset GC in District VI. GCFP sponsored a 10-day trip to the Gardens of England, which culminated in a day at the Chelsea Flower Show. She stated it was a pleasure serving as GCFP President and thanked all who sent her and her family caring messages during their times of loss. It was and continues to be a difficult period for her and members' positive messages help every day. She conveyed her best wishes to Pat Wolanski and her 2025-2027 Board.

The **1st Vice President/President Elect, Pat Wolanski**, reported that for the past two years, this Vice President met monthly with the District Directors. These meetings provided a valuable opportunity for collaboration, reviewing GCFP policies, bylaws, standing rules, and the District Director's manual. They discussed topics such as membership growth, fundraising strategies, and addressing current challenges and finding effective solutions. As her term as First Vice President closes, she expressed appreciation for the District Directors' commitment, dedication and contributions that provided monthly programs for the GCFP membership as well as for the time they shared. These programs enriched members' knowledge on a variety of engaging topics that support GCFP'S mission and goals. President-Elect Pat has also been handling incoming emails from both members and the community, responding to or directing them to the appropriate individuals as needed. At the June Business Meeting, she became President-Elect and began assembling her leadership team and completed this process by October. Her focus has been organizing her Board and establishing key initiatives for her Presidency. A major project has been the updating of all of our manuals, which will soon be posted on our website. She was fortunate to have the help of her chairs in this effort, and she greatly appreciated their support. In July, the President-Elect attended District VIII's Annual Picnic in Erie. The summer ended with the Pucketos Garden Club's "Sparkle and Glitz" luncheon. September was dedicated to the Tour de PA, where she attended and spoke at all of the Annual District meetings, engaging with members and conducting installations in the President's absence. During several of these meetings, she presented a PowerPoint on behalf of the 2025 Convention Chair, to introduce and promote the Convention to members. In October, President-Elect Pat attended the CAR-SGC Conference in New Jersey, to further strengthen regional

connections. Most recently, on April 1, she held a Zoom meeting with her incoming 2025-27 Board in order to depart from the tradition of meeting after the close of the convention. During this session, she presented a PowerPoint, and her Board provisionally approved her appointees and reviewed her key initiatives. Her past year has been one of preparation, planning, and engagement, and she looks forward to the work ahead.

The **2nd Vice President, Tonya Young**, reported that since the April 2024 Convention, she attended the June and October Board Meetings held at the Wyndham Garden in Boalsburg, PA, planned the meals and collected reservations. She secured the same site for upcoming meetings in 2025. Tonya attended the dedication of a Gold Star Marker at Patriot Park in Stoystown, PA, and a fabulous tea and program hosted by the Pucketos Garden Club in August. Later that month, the club presidents' meeting was held on Zoom. She attended the Districts' Annual Meetings across the State and witnessed the installation of new officers, lovely venues, delicious food, interesting and informative programs and speakers with incredible attention to details. She enjoyed speaking and meeting members, listening to their ideas, suggestions, and concerns and thanked them for their hospitality. There is nothing better than face-to-face conversations. Our garden clubs across our state are active, visible, and proud of their impact on their communities and the world. She looks forward to the trip in 2025. Tonya attended the October CAR-SGC Conference in Basking Ridge, NJ, and was honored to represent Pennsylvania in a floral design challenge. This officer assisted with Zoom for the monthly District Director Meetings, the Districts' monthly webinars and scheduled Zoom meetings when requested. In February, she was involved in the Philadelphia Flower Show, serving as the Vice Chair of Botanical Arts, and represented the GCFP on a judging panel. In March, she attended the annual tea hosted by Westmoreland Garden Council. She also attended 2027 Convention planning meetings, collaborated to update the BOD and other manuals, and attended planning meetings for President-Elect Wolanski's upcoming initiatives.

The **Recording Secretary, Marilyn Backus**, reported that the Minutes of the 94th GCFP Convention, held on April 7-9, 2024, were approved, distributed electronically and posted on the GCFP website.

The **Treasurer, Vivian Hall**, reviewed details of Financial Statements received from **Financial Advisor, Cindy Layton**. The statements were projected on a screen and hardcopies were available. The **GCFP Asset Summary as of February 28, 2025** showed Total Checking, Savings and Petty Cash equaled \$54,193. Total Advances Receivable pertinent to the 2025-2027 Conventions was \$7,500. The Penny Pines Reforestation Total, including \$10,000 in the Stifel account, was \$22,192.03. The **GCFP Statement of Financial Activity May 1, 2024 – February 28, 2025**, stated income from Total Membership Dues was \$49,122.50. The 2024 Convention Proceeds allocated \$13,564.67 to GCFP and \$4,521.56 to District IV. The sale of Past District Director pins contributed \$560. Total Income was \$63,247.17. Total Expenses from Total General and Administrative, Chairman's Expenses, Keystone Gardener, Memberships, and Officer's Allowances were \$47,789.04, which resulted in a positive Variance of Income vs. Expenses of \$15,458.13.

The **Financial Secretary, Barbara Brand**, reported the GCFP Dues Account activity at BB&T/Truist for the period October 1, 2024 – March 25, 2025:

GCFP Dues Account, Truist*

Balance, 10/01/2024		\$100.00
Deposits: Member dues	\$950.00	
Total Receipts/ Balance	\$950.00	\$1,049.00
Disbursements		

Transfers to Treasurer

(\$949.00)

Balance, 10/02/2023

\$100.00

Total dues transferred to Treasurer since 05/01/2024 \$49,452.50

Notes: 1. *Check #143 transferring dues on 9/28/2024 was over by \$1.

2. Rockledge Garden Club (VII) did not pay annual dues and was officially dropped from GCFP membership as of 10/15/2024.

The **Corresponding Secretary, Flossie Narducci**, reported that since the last Board Meeting in October of 2024, condolences were sent to **GCFP President, Leeanna Ryba** on the passing of her mother, Mildred Schorr, who was 103 years old. A sympathy card with a message was also sent to **Memory Book Chair, Rose Romboski**, on the passing of her husband. Get-well messages were sent to **Chaplain Margie Wolf, Treasurer Vivian Hall** and **Sue Bunkin**. She asked to be notified if any club member is ill, had surgery, is celebrating a special birthday or has passed away.

The **Parliamentarian, Sharon Brown**, reported that during the past two years, she advised officers, directors and members on questions of parliamentary procedure. In all situations, she referred to Robert's Rules of Order when necessary and advised "common sense" whenever possible. Some of the items under discussion included:

Should the treasurer be on the Financial Review Committee?

What does the GCFP Record Retention policy recommend for a dissolving club?

Can a district elected officer serve concurrently as a state elected officer?

This Parliamentarian also participated in the Zoom Leadership Workshop held during March 2024, after which she had several requests from district directors for a copy of the "Protocol for Meetings". After consultation with President Ryba, it was decided to put this agenda on the GCFP website so that it may be referenced by all club presidents, directors and members.

REPORTS OF THE DISTRICT DIRECTORS

The **District I Director, Pamela Walsh**, reported that in November 2024 her district hosted the 2nd Annual Centerpiece Challenge where two person teams from 8 clubs were given the same bouquet of flowers, containers, additional embellishments and then asked to create a fall centerpiece. Club members in attendance purchased raffle tickets to vote for their favorite Centerpiece. The team with the greatest number of tickets won a small prize, as did the second and third place winners. The tickets were then pulled, and winners took home the centerpiece for which they voted. Many of her clubs had holiday activities that included a fashion show and luncheon, Christmas fairs, greens sales, a special design meeting where the presenter's creations were raffled, wreath making workshops, and holiday luncheons. Several clubs had special programs, either on Zoom or in person, during their meetings. In March, two of their clubs entered the Design Class in the Philadelphia Horticultural Society's (PHS) Flower Show. Elverson won blue and red ribbons in the pocket garden, "For Peat's Sake", and Uwchlan Garden Club entered the garden class, "Back to the Future", and won blue and red ribbons, the PHS Sustainability Award, the PHS Gardening for the Greater Good Award, the Herb Society Award, the Betty K. Greene Award to the outstanding blue-ribbon winner in the seven design classes, and the Penn Valley Garden Club Trophy! Several members of both clubs also won ribbons in horticulture and artistic and botanical arts classes. Members of several District I clubs also served as volunteers and judges during the 10 day show. Her clubs are preparing for upcoming plant sales, flower shows, and activities with youth and with seniors.

The **District II/III Director, Claire Kukiela**, highlighted the characteristic and activities associated with District II/III: **We love to learn:** Our clubs participated in the Citizen Science projects where we collected and submitted data on two topics - bird counts and rainfall. A shout out goes to Upper Perkiomen GC and their President Diana Rudloff's leadership and work in tabulating the data that is being submitted nationwide. Kudos as well to all the members of District II/III who help to collect and report the data. **We host Garden Tours:** Emmaus, South Schuylkill, Milford, Parkland, and Pottstown Garden Clubs held tours which generated admiration and educational opportunities in 2024. Bethlehem GC held a variation on this by selecting beautiful yards in Bethlehem and providing awards. **We are industrious:** Reading, Emmaus, Parkland, South Schuylkill, Pottstown, and Milford Garden Clubs have plant sales, not only as fundraisers but, as a vehicle for educating the public and to attract new members. **We collaborate amongst ourselves and strengthen our knowledge as well as our bonds:** Emmaus and Parkland Garden Clubs received Judge Emeritus, Ginnie Tietjens, instruction on floral design for five classes over many months. **We host Flower shows:** Emmaus, Bethlehem, Hazleton, and Milford Garden clubs sponsored flower shows in the last year. By the way, have you Kabloomed today? **We hold plant sales:** at Emmaus, Parkland, Milford, South Schuylkill, Pottstown, and Reading Garden Clubs. Upper Perkiomen GC instead holds a seed swap amongst members where they share their knowledge as well as their collections of plants. **Educating the public:** Monroe GC has a Facebook page where daily garden tips for their community are posted. Allentown's Rose Ebersole provides annual floral design instruction at the Allentown Fair and also has a table to inform the community of all the GCFP clubs in the Lehigh Valley. **We are philanthropic:** almost all our clubs provide scholarships to support our youth attending colleges and universities and also provide Horticultural Enrichment programs where seniors or young adults get the opportunity to enjoy nature. Monroe Garden Club provides a scholarship for a lucky young person to attend an environmental camp. The Reading GC created eighty-two silk floral arrangements for Hospice patients. Monroe GC continues to collect monthly for a local food bank. Pottstown GC hosts a youth club at the library four times a year tying each program to a book. Parkland GC has sponsored a girl scout troop for many years. Now they are also providing garden programs for summer youth camps. **We provide programs:** Allentown, Parkland, Monroe, and Bethlehem Garden Clubs provided programs and trees to educate, entertain, and enhance our communities, which included Arbor Day programs. **We are community focused:** Milford GC helped to decorate Grey Towers National Historic Site at Christmas and placed Christmas displays of greens throughout the town. The club also placed twenty-four planters throughout historic Milford during the summer. Many of our other clubs have similar activities.

The **District IV Director, Carla Kelly**, reported:

- A Zoom in November with the club presidents to set District goals.
- A Zoom Board meeting in January.
- A "Garden Chat," which is an informal meeting with problem solving and open-ended time for discussion, occurred in February.
- A Leadership Workshop was held in March with talks from incoming state President, Pat Wolanski, and the state-wide Awards Chair, Marilyn Small. District IV Technology Literacy Chair, Sandy Benedict, gave tips for effective Power Point slides. Melanie Markowski spoke about topics from the GCFP Guidelines for Club Presidents. Carla talked about Robert's Rules, how to do a financial review of club's records, and how to do a press release which is coordinated with social media.
- The in-person spring Board meeting had 75, which is high attendance, on March 31. It was her first one to conduct with 24 speakers and 111 slides on their slideshow to illustrate the reports.

Garden clubs have multiple interests that someone can pursue. Carla is tying together those varied topics into focused themes at each meeting, and using small motivational talks about how members can keep themselves relevant in communities. They expanded their website so that the clubs do not have to reinvent the wheel, and can find references and direction for programs and committee work. Carla chose a naked flowering plant as her symbol for district IV. It is uprooted, with the roots illustrating that they conserve our roots of how National Garden Club federations started by having local clubs join together to lobby for groundwater and parks in 1929. It's flowering to show they are blooming. In the middle is the plant, itself, where they need to make provision for our future growth with fertilizers such as Technology Literacy, expanding knowledge of related environmental issues and the related legislative impact, horticulture, and about Flowers Shows. Flower shows started when their clubs joined the Federation. They also need to provision future growth with formal club development. This was identified by our clubs' presidents in their District goals session. She chose a focus topic for everyone to have a theme in their reports. The District IV website depicts how the four pillar design illustrates their rich history. The four district board meetings each have a theme.

- January was Parks, which ties into Civic Planting.
- March is Groundwater, which ties into Conservation.
- June is Gardening or horticulture.
- August will be Design, which will be on schedule to prepare for their district's Annual Meeting's flower show.

Carla hoped that preserving their conservation roots and the new learning topics will lead to new activities that make their clubs strong and relevant in their communities.

The **District V Director, Joyce Wenner**, was absent, but **Dr. Wilma Light** read Joyce's report. Since becoming District V Director, Joyce has found that the clubs of District V are enthusiastic about growing their membership and staying active in their communities. They do this by reaching out on Facebook, putting out flyers in their communities explaining what their clubs are all about, and inviting guests to special events. One example is Mifflin County GC 's wine, cheese and chocolate event, to which members brought a guest. There are Civic Beautification projects, where the clubs' planted and maintained gardens in their communities. The Heritage Club placed pole baskets in their downtown area and planters in other areas of the community. The Duboistown Club planted a garden in their local park, and, on Arbor Day, a tree was planted, in memory or in honor of a club member. Then there were programs, such as Standing Stone's informative program, Trees and Bees. McEwensville 's program was Hemp and how beneficial it is for the land. Other outstanding projects included the Annual Meeting, co-hosted by Alexandria and Standing Stone Clubs, the NEX TEX plastic recycling project of the Heritage Club and Duboistown Club's plant sale at the Bald Eagle Art Club's annual outdoor show. Their clubs donated to scholarships funds and sent money to Natural Disasters. They also maintained the Blue Star Memorials in their areas. Sandy Hendricks, of McEwensville Club, does a fundraiser to help with the cost of maintaining the memorials. The clubs also have youth programs and horticulture therapy.

The **District VI Director, Mary Lou Colussy**, reported District VI is alive, healthy and going strong! Her district is comprised of eight clubs with 366 members in six counties, which includes Bedford, Blair, Cambria, Indiana, Somerset and Westmoreland. Even though they are geographically expansive, the district coexists like a family. Most of the clubs interact with the other clubs in events, programs and personnel. Our district newsletter, Seedlings, published quarterly keeps the clubs informed of upcoming events and happenings across the district.

- Bedford GC will host the annual meeting on August 27 at the American Legion in Bedford.
- Blair GC will provide the community with an August flower show in Hollidaysburg. They also plan to hold a program at the historic Baker's mansion as it celebrates 75 years as a club. Members purchased a Gold Star Memorial, which will be displayed at the Veterans War

Memorial Park. The upcoming ceremony will be held when all the paperwork has been completed.

- The GC of Johnstown is changing things this year to celebrate their 95th anniversary. Instead of a luncheon at Sunnehanna Country Club, members will provide a boutique in conjunction with the Westmont Home Tour on December 6 at the Westmont Presbyterian Church.
- Evergreen GC is planning their annual *Tinsel Time* on December 4 at the Ramada Inn.
- Indiana Garden Club's 50th annual *May Mart* will take place on May 16-17 at the S&T Bank Arena in Indiana PA. The club will sponsor a flower show as well this August!
- Patton GC will spice things up this June with their Annual Plant Sale, which supports the Scholarship Fund. This one event allows the club to donate two \$1,000 scholarships to local high school seniors. PGC also started a youth program at the Middle School. Members from the club work with the students during an after-school program, to inspire and motivate them in many areas of gardening and floral design.
- Somerset GC has been and will be busy this gardening season with their local projects at the Children's Aide home and sprucing up their downtown streets with spectacular floral planters.
- Weeders and Seeders Garden Club began a "re-do" of Valley Veterans Park, which displays their Blue Star Marker in the heart of the borough. The project will start when weather and the schedules of all concerned allow. Adequate funds have been secured from several local foundations. The plan is to elevate the flower beds, provide all new shrubs and plants, replace the patio, and resurface three benches. A rededication will be scheduled soon.

The **District VII Director, Marilyn Backus**, stated that District VII has 285 members in eleven clubs in eastern Allegheny and western Westmoreland Counties. In 2016, they had 100 more members in 12 clubs. Our district members are quite cost sensitive and that has affected the attendance at our functions. At the October meeting, she announced that District VII would be investigating ways to make the benefits of participation in a federated district more available and affordable which, in turn, should attract new members. At its January meeting, the Board "blessed" two new district-sponsored events: a district bus tour of private and public gardens in Indiana PA in early July, which they voted to subsidize for 30-45 registrants at \$20 per person; and a district-sponsored Horticulture Specialty Flower Show called "*The Dog Days of Summer*," to attract and involve the public and members in the eight clubs who haven't had a flower show, to show off backyard plants and edibles on Saturday, July 26. The Board also approved a new emphasis on existing district and club activities. The first was the District's annual March Spring Membership Lunch, for which they agreed that each Board member would prepare a dish for the buffet for cost reasons. They provided each attendee with a handheld Calendar of District VII Events, so they could see and visit many available things to do. Each President also received a District VII brochure for copying and giving to potential members who claimed scheduling conflicts with their particular club's activities. They also found a benefit to bestow upon our Board members (!!) It was to offer free consignment tables, not limited to garden items, if the Board member agreed to give 20% of their sales to District VII. Board members requested eight tables, and they brought a lot of shopping fun and joy before both the meeting and lunch, because the business reports were limited to one hour. Seldom-seen club presidents and others were so filled with fun and conversation that they volunteered for District VII's flower show! The Spring Lunch allowed us to charge an affordable \$15/person that netted us a profit of \$772 from four hours and 51 registrants! The theme for district VII this term is obvious, "Plant America: Grow Our Garden Clubs!" Angie Raitano, of Landscape Design Society, provided ten centerpieces, and invited members to bring a guest to the first of the club's three carpool outings, Rachel Carson Homestead, on April 15. She hosted a table at the Spring Tea of Westmoreland Garden Council that was attended by Murrys ville, Forest Hills, Joyful Bloomers and Highland Park members. Haddie Weber, of District X's Munhall and VII's Home Gardeners, hosted an overnight bus trip to the Philadelphia Flower Show that included Monroeville and Forest Hills. Monroeville and Murrys ville cohosted speakers at their libraries'.

Forest Hills' *Spring Thaw* Design Specialty Flower Show had guests from Monroeville, Joyful Bloomers, Burrellton and Highland Park.

The **District VIII Director, Bonita Herman**, reported her theme this term is "*IF NOTHING CHANGES, NOTHING CHANGES*". Sadly, Warren Garden Club left the district due to many of the issues known to many: lack of participation, aging members and no one to take officer positions. This was not the change she wanted. District VIII, along with District IX, is installing a Gold Star Memorial at the I-80 Welcome Center on the Ohio/Pennsylvania state line and will be the first Gold Star Memorial on I-80. More information will be coming. In District VIII, there are eleven clubs and one affiliate with approximately 307 members. In 2019-2020, there were over 500. Her clubs give more than \$4,500 for scholarships. When there is no recipient, the clubs will give some funds to District VIII's Scholarship Fund. Four clubs have some type of Horticulture Program or Therapy. This may include some hands-on crafts, tea cup flower arrangements, and to making or giving flower arrangements to the facilities for the residents to enjoy. Youth programs range from elementary and high school garden clubs, and the Girl Scouts, with whom at least five garden clubs participate. Some clubs helped with their vegetable beds and crafts that include horticulture. One garden club, including their meeting facility, participates in a plastic wrap recycling program which helps the Conservation District to obtain recycled benches for the park. Like most other district clubs, their clubs are actively involved with community garden and beautification projects in their city, town, or municipalities. They may provide the man-power for planting vegetable beds, placing planters, hanging baskets, pots, and providing education. They also maintain, restore and plant at the Blue Star Gardens in their club, and even help cleaning up parks and cemeteries. Donations are outstanding. One club has given, for over forty years, each fifth grader in their township a tree sapling, many of which are still standing. Some of the clubs donate money or food to the local food banks in the area. Bonita found that none of the clubs in her district have a Newsletter, which could be in need of a "CHANGE", such as a District Newsletter. Bonita hosts a President/VP Zoom meeting every 2-3 months to pass on information and to keep herself and everyone else in the loop. Her district will be hosting the State Convention 2026 in Erie. Joyce Milburg and she are so pleased with the good turnout for meetings and their helpful clubs and members.

The **District IX Director, Stacey Ivol**, reported that an issue that had been brewing in her district came to a head in October, shortly after assuming her directorship. One club was discriminating against those members who did not live in a certain zip code. Fortunately, thanks to Claudia Bernardo, the former district director, had started a Code of Conduct Committee, which allowed them to navigate through this very ugly situation. This garden club did leave the district but not before alienating at least half of their members. At the beginning of the year, Stacey then learned that one of their long-time clubs might have to dissolve. Fortunately, three capable officers from the club are handling the dissolution. It is with a heavy heart that she announced Greybrooke Garden Club will be departing at the end of April. The district's Members' Day Out event, held in March, has been typically organized by a club each year. This year, it was opened to party planning enthusiasts across their district. There were 118 members who attended! The raffle baskets sparkled and a 50/50 was added. Happily, a number of members from various clubs volunteered to assist with next year's event planning. At the start of her term, Stacey's objective was to actively involve as many club members as possible in district functions. To achieve this, she encouraged committee chairs to invite members from various clubs to join their committees, thus allowing members to attend district meetings and become engaged in the activities of the district. She has been speaking with one of her tech peeps about forming a District IX Garden Club Forum, where members from all clubs can come together to discuss their clubs together as a district. As a district, members helped one of their

clubs to collect 1,000 lbs. of plastic bags and earn a park bench. She is confident that it is together that her clubs will move forward.

The **District X Director, Martha Alexander**, reported the theme for District X this year is *Growing Community Through Gardening*. Their efforts to foster a sense of community have been more vibrant than ever. To celebrate their 25th anniversary as a district, her members recently held a *Mad Hatter's Spring Tea*, which was a delightful and memorable event due to the exceptionally talented and creative group of plant enthusiasts. Some of their current initiatives include:

- Developing their own program speakers' guide.
- Organizing joint adventures and trips, such as their visit to the Philadelphia Flower Show.
- Planning a possible district flower show in the near future. District X continues to shine in the realm of flower shows. They currently have three clubs that hold regular flower shows, and two clubs have earned prestigious national awards:
 - Martha Washington Garden Club's *Red, White & Bloom* won for their small standard patriotic flower show,
 - Great Meadows Garden Club's *Alice in Wonderland* earned an award for their standard flower show.

She encouraged all to visit their upcoming flower shows this July and August! District X commits to growing community in various ways, which includes:

- Their ten garden clubs that maintain a total of 19 gardens, including two Blue Star Memorials. A third Blue Star Memorial will be dedicated on Memorial Day.
- Eight of their ten clubs provide scholarships, and two of their members will receive district scholarships to attend the upcoming Flower Show School.
- Four of our clubs are involved in Horticulture Therapy, while one club provides floral mugs to hospice patients.
- Two clubs work with junior gardener groups (*Sprouts and Shoots*), and one club has developed new children's lesson plans for the GCFP website.
- Their clubs also participate in bottle cap recycling, Meals on Wheels, and offering garden advice and tips on Facebook.

The **District XI Director, Flossie Narducci**, at her installation invited all members of the eleven clubs comprising the District to become members of "Flossie's Posse". She listed a few highlights from all the successful events and projects accomplished by the Posse:

- Garden Club of Bristol Borough achieved success at the Philadelphia Flower Show, with three participants winning a total of 28 ribbons, including 5 blue, 7 red, 3 yellow, and 13 honorable mentions.
- Four Lanes End Garden Club's Community Outreach Committee will visit local pre-schools to provide a gardening project for the children. The scholarship committee has contacted local schools to promote submission of applications for their annual Scholarship.
- Gardeners of the Crooked Billet had Leigh Kieser present "Edibles in Your Landscape - You won't even know I'm There" and Paige Menton presented tips for "Creating a Healthy Wildlife Habitat in Your Yard."
- Norristown Garden Club's 74th Holiday House Tour was a huge success. Ten members entered the Philadelphia Flower Show and won 34 ribbons.
- Our Garden Club of Philadelphia and Vicinity's members participated in the PHS Flower Show winning ribbons and volunteering. Member, Wilfreta Baugh, MD, is now the Chair of the PHS Flower Show Committee.
- Old York Road Garden Club donated money to Abington High School Garden Club to create an entry in the Philadelphia Flower Show's Entryway Class. They received an Honorable Mention.

- Outdoor Gardeners sponsored five awards at the Montgomery County Science Fair. Members interviewed 42 students whose projects examined everything from using greywater to water houseplants, to experimenting with hydroponic seed germination, to exploring how music impacts plant growth.
- Swedesford Garden Club continued to work on outreach to new members. At the March meeting, they enjoyed “Introduction to Permaculture” and Master Gardener, Leigh Kieser, will present “Herbs 101” in April.
- Tohickon Garden Club’s January meeting kicked off the year with a Pot-luck Brunch and Diane Allison’s educational presentation on birds. In February, Max Burton delivered a lecture on the factors affecting native tree populations.
- Trevoise Horticultural Society is preparing for their annual Plant Sale on May 20. Members divided their overgrown house plants and started a variety of vegetables from seed. Their annual Flower Show, La Dolce Vita, is scheduled for August 22-23, 2025.

REPORTS OF THE BOARD CHAIRS

The **Blue Star / Gold Star Memorial Chair, Karen Faust**, predicted a very good year for the Blue Star/Gold Star Marker Program in Pennsylvania. The GCFP currently awaits the dedication of three Blue or Gold Star Highway Markers at several Penn-DOT Welcome Centers located at:

- I-80: ½ Mile east of the PA/OH border at West Middlesex. This will be the first marker co-sponsored by two GCFP Districts and the first GOLD STAR HIGHWAY MARKER AT A WELCOME CENTER. A summer dedication will be hosted by District VIII (Erie area) and District IX (North of Pittsburgh).
- I-70: 5 Miles east of the PA/WV border at Claysville. Sponsored by District X (South of Pittsburgh) in cooperation with Penn-DOT, this Blue Star Highway Marker will be dedicated Memorial Day weekend.
- I-81: 1.5 miles from the PA/MD border. GCFP District IV in cooperation with PennDOT will dedicate this Blue Star Highway Marker in May 2025.

Two additional Markers have been added to her 2025 list:

- James E Van Sandt VA Medical Center in Altoona will have a Gold Star Memorial Marker dedicated on Veteran’s Day 2025. This marker is sponsored by Blair Garden Club in District VI.
- Soldiers & Sailors Field in Mechanicsburg was chosen by Penn Cumberland Garden Club in cooperation with the Borough of Mechanicsburg. This Blue Star Memorial Marker will be dedicated in early August of this year.

Karen is currently working with Ellen Wagner, Tourist Information Supervisor with PennDOT, who has a good understanding of the Marker Program and the desire to see one installed at the Welcome Center on I-70 Westbound – ½ mile West of the PA/MD Border at Warfordsburg, PA. Many who travel either North or South entering or leaving the Turnpike use this Highway. While Ellen is a Blue Star fan, she is not a Garden Club member and therefore does not have access to Club or District funds. Karen proposed a GCFP funded Marker for this highly visible Welcome Center at Warfordsburg. She will approach the GCFP Finance Committee at the June Board meeting with this proposal. Pennsylvania has a total of 118 Markers in the ground or on order. All but 10 of these markers were installed since 2000, which is quite indicative of a healthy Blue/Gold Star Marker Program. She encouraged all to visit the Blue/Gold Star educational display in the lobby area of the hotel.

The **501 C-3 Chair, Mary Jo Gardill**, explained that the 501 C-3 is a FEDERAL charitable, non-profit status, provided by the IRS to verify federal income tax exemption for organizations (NOT state sales tax). The GCFP files the 990 as the parent organization, and its districts and clubs are under this umbrella. This is a huge benefit of being a federated club. GCFP's fiscal year is May 1 to April 30 and the process is:

- On May 1, each club and district's treasurer should receive an email with the short (earned under \$50,000) and long (earned \$50,000 & over) form of the 990.
- On the short form, merely signing verifies that your organization earned under \$50,000 in that fiscal year, so no financials are required, except for gaming.
- The gaming revenue is for raffles, 50/50, bingo etc., and it's one line: (gross profits) minus (total expenses), which equals (net profit).
- Signed and completed forms may be emailed, faxed or postal mailed, on or after May 1, not before. It should be received by the 501 C-3 Chair preferably before May 15.
- Magic green cards should be with each garden club's treasurer's check book, with the EIN, as well as the 501-C3 and dues requirements.
- District Directors, please notify the new GCFP 501 C-3 reporter as soon as possible regarding new garden clubs so that, if there are any issues of past problems with the IRS, they can be resolved.
- If a club does not receive the current 990 form on May 1, it will be available on the GCFP website.
- Please note that according to the IRS guidelines, it is the responsibility of each garden club to issue a 1099 to any individual who is paid \$600 or more.

The **Nominating Committee Chair, Diane Hughes**, presented the following slate of nominees for the 2025-2027 term of GCFP Officers:

President	Patricia Wolanski
First Vice President	Tonya Young
Second Vice President	Mary Hetrick
Treasurer	Vivian Hall
Financial Secretary	Sheila Croushore
Recording Secretary	Deborah Davis

MOTION #1: Jane Kruse motioned to accept the slate of nominees, Mary Jo Gardill seconded and the membership verbally voted to accept. **Accepted**

The Scholarship Committee Chair, Sandra Hendricks, was absent and sent no report.

RECOMMENDATION FROM THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

MOTION #2: President Leeanna proposed the following change to the GCFP Bylaws: The GCFP Executive Committee and Full Board recommends the General Membership approves a Bylaw Change for Article VI, Officers and Their Duties, Section C , which currently states "No officer may serve in two (2) elected positions during a term." The proposed change is to insert the letters GCFP before the word "elected." The revision would state "No officer may serve in two (2) GCFP elected positions during a term." This change is necessary because questions have arisen concerning members serving as elected officers at the state and district levels at the same time. Stacey Ivoll made the motion to make this change, Nancy Cuttic seconded and the general assembly accepted the motion by verbal assent.

Accepted

PENDING BUSINESS

President Leeanna presented Joyce Peterson with a certificate for recently completing all four NGC schools and earning 4-Star membership to join Pat Ptascik, Charlotte Zerance, Carole Spahr (deceased), Claire Leichter, Joyce Wallen, Nancy Fulk and Barbara Andrus. Current 5-star members, who attained Master status in all four schools, are: Dorthy Yard, Patricia Beall, Judith Morley, Sheila Croushore, Gail Corle Manna and Judy Vehse.

President Leeanna also distributed certificates to the following Clubs for their special 2025 GCFP Federation Anniversaries at 50/60/75/90 years:

- For 50 years of federation, The Littleton Area Garden Club in District IV.
- For 75 years of federation, Allentown Garden Club of District II/III and Blair Garden Club of District VI.
- For 90 years of federation, The Garden Club of Johnstown of District VI; Oil City Garden Club of District VIII and Uwchlan Garden Club of District I.

Clubs celebrating 50, 75 and 100 year anniversaries receive a \$100 award.

President Leeanna announced the winners of the Club Membership Award, which recognizes the greatest number of new members in the calendar year:

- For a Small Club up to 20 members, The Garden Club of Montrose of District II/III gained 6 new members.
- For a Medium Club with 21 to 50 members, Verona Garden Club of District VII gained 13 new members
- For a Large Club with 51+ members, The Garden Club of York of District IV gained 34 new members

Chaplain Margie Wolff conducted a Memorial Service using a candelabra of unlit candles, a bell and a separately lit candle. Each district director read their district's members' names who passed on since the 2024 Convention. When each director finished, Margie rang a bell in memory of the deceased.

The **2025 Convention Chair, Karen Wychock**, announced that the Raffles' results would be posted at 4:30 PM and the items would be available for pickup after dinner; the Natural Disaster collectors would be posted at the dining room exit doors; the nametags would be collected and recycled for the 2026 Convention; the Hospitality Room was located in the Sterling Room and two speakers exchanged rooms for Session C.

At 10:30 AM, **President Leeanna** announced that the 2025 Annual Business Meeting was adjourned until Tuesday at 2 PM, after the Judges Council luncheon.

The Business Meeting reconvened at 2:00 PM with President Leeanna.

The **2025 Convention Registrar, Barbara Stoebenau**, presented the Final Credentials report, the numbers of which did not change from the Preliminary Credentials report on page 1 of these Minutes.

President Leeanna introduced the **2026 Convention Chair, Joyce Millberg**, who used a PowerPoint presentation, to invite all to see District VIII's highlights and the "MYSTerie by the Bay". **Martha Alexander and Diana Hughes** prepared and read the Courtesy Resolutions (attached to these Minutes) that thanked all involved in planning and executing the 2025 Convention.

The meeting adjourned at 2:40 PM.

Marilyn C. Backus – GCFP Recording Secretary

Ref. Vivian Hall issued the Agenda and initial Financial Statements on March 11, 2025. Cynthia Layton sent the revised Statement of Financial Activity on March 27, 2025. Barbara Brand sent the Financial Secretary's Reports on March 26, 2025. The 2025 Convention Courtesy Resolutions read at the close of the Convention are attached to these Minutes.