

# Orange County Beekeepers Association

## Meeting Minutes

February 10, 2022

Tim Struttman, OCBA President, opened the meeting and welcomed everyone for the February meeting. The meeting was attended by 63 members (48 via Zoom, and 15 in-person at the new Orange County Extension Office in Hillsborough).

Nancy Oglesby, OCBA Vice President, introduced our speaker, **George McAllister**. George is a past president of the Mecklenburg County Beekeepers Association and keeps bees in Charlotte and Catawba county.

### **Presentation:**

#### **“Urban Beekeeping using Queen Castles”**

George shared his beekeeping strategy which relies on using queen castle colonies (QCCs) to create a “self-sustaining” apiary. Having his own queens available throughout the season takes a lot of stress out of beekeeping. He described how his QCCs are a way to keep his apiaries stocked with “spare-parts”—resources like bees, brood, and queens. Use of queen castles allows him to have the flexibility and resources to respond to many beekeeping scenarios, such as swarm prevention, in an urban environment with space restrictions where unlimited expansion of an apiary is not feasible.

A typical queen castle consists of a single hive body divided into three separate compartments, each with its own entrance, feeder, and room for three frames of bees.

George does hive inspections on all of his hives every 7 days during the spring, summer, and fall to identify and remove swarm cells before a hive has a chance to swarm. He often removes the entire frame that holds the swarm cell(s), and uses that frame and another frame taken from the same or a different hive to start a new QCC. He finds that even if the hive builds new swarm cells to replace the ones he removed, if he keeps checking for and removing all swarm cells on a weekly basis, the colony eventually gives up and stops making them.

George also talked about the seasonal uses of queen castles:

- Spring (pre-nectar flow): Use queens from QCCs to replace old/failing queens or add brood/bees to boost population of weaker overwintered hives
- Swarm season: Swarm management, remove swarm cells from production hives to raise new queens, create new QCCs from splits and/or swarms.
- Nectar flow: Re-queen production hives using QCC queens, use QCCs to draw out foundation, move newly drawn comb from QCC to honey production hives

- Post-nectar flow: Use QCC resources to expand number of hives if needed/desired, equalize resources (bees and/or brood) to weak hives
- Winter: Use QCC to overwinter queens raised from swarm cells (“queens in-waiting”).

George concluded by restating the many benefits of using QCCs for apiary management, swarm prevention, and maximizing honey production. He encouraged beekeepers to begin by implementing even one of these strategies, in particular, using queen castles to raise swarm cell queens.

## **Club Business:**

### **Membership**

Wayne Vanderburg, Membership Co-director, reported there were 22 new memberships and renewals in January. This brings the OCBA current membership count to 170 members, 74 of which are lifetime members. Wayne also reminded the group that memberships must be renewed prior to the end of March in order to qualify for the OCBA extractor rental program.

### **Finance**

No update provided.

### **Bee School**

Carrie Donley reported on Randall Austin’s behalf that there has been a lot of enthusiasm from Bee School attendees. There will also be an upcoming hive building workshop.

### **Apprenticeship Beekeeper Program**

Vikki Robertson began the introductions of the 2 new apprentices for 2022:

1. Ripley is a student at Carolina Friends School. She learned about beekeeping and this apprenticeship program from her teacher, Tommy Johnson, who is an OCBA member. Lisa Vogel will be Ripley’s mentor during this beekeeping season.
2. Jasper is a student at Triangle Day School. David Eckert will be Jasper’s mentor.

### **Outreach**

Dawn Rogers, Community Outreach Director, thanked Lisa Vogel and Jeannie Arnts for giving a presentation at a school garden club last weekend. She also provided an update on an upcoming event at Spring Haven Farm’s Baby Goat Festival (<https://www.springhaven.farm>). For 3 weekends starting February 19th (6 days total), OCBA volunteers will be staffing an informational booth to talk to the public about honey bees and beekeeping, as well as having the opportunity to sell their own honey.

### **Other Announcements:**

Tim Struttman announced that Beekeeper Collaboratives sign-up is open through the 3<sup>rd</sup> week in March. Beekeeper Collaboratives are small groups of beekeepers with at least 1 year of beekeeping experience

who meet at member's apiaries throughout the season for hands-on collaborative learning through hive inspections.

David Bailey (<https://baileybeesupply.com>) provided an update on spring 2022 packages, which are selling well. Each package purchase will earn a free t-shirt, and each pick-up day there will be 5 Golden Tickets (\$100 gift certificate). He is also hiring part-time retail positions (2-3 days/week) for the store.

Tim Struttman reminded attendees about the Spring 2022 NCSBA meeting, which will be held in New Bern March 3-5.

### **Door Prizes**

1. Queen castle (donated by David Bailey): Walter Starks
2. Bee crossing sign and decorative flowers: Kevin Bickford
3. Travel mug (Bailey Bee Supply): Carrie Donley
4. Hive "coozie" insulation: Mark Powers
5. Cardboard nuc box (donated by Chris Apple): Ripley
6. 24-8 oz glass jars (donated by Chris Apple): Celeste Mayer

### **Next Month's Speaker**

The speaker on March 10<sup>th</sup> will be Libby Mack, from the Mecklenburg County Beekeepers Association. She will be speaking to us about managing swarms and splits, a very timely topic for this time of year! Also presenting at the March meeting: The 2021 OCBA Apprentices will be giving their presentations on their experiences, observations, and lessons learned during their 1 year apprenticeships.

*Erika Wittchen*  
*OCBA Secretary*