January meeting minutes were accepted by motion and seconded.

**Treasurer's Report:** Cheryl Housden reported that we are in budget.

**2019 SWARM LIST:** If you would like to participate in the Swarm List please sign up using the link provided on the SOBA website. Last year’s list has been deleted, so even if you were included in the list last year you will need to sign up again. Only members in good standing can participate in the Swarm List.

**2019 SOBA Bee School:** Mark your calendars, class is April 20th and space is limited. Please sign up using the SOBA website.

May 20th is International Bee day! This is a great time to bug all your friends, coworkers, and family by talking nonstop about how cool bees are and how cool you are for being a beekeeper!

Eric McEwen reported on the January OSBA meeting. The outlook is grim, but not hopeless! Commercial beeks are struggling across the nation. Bees are dying from new causative agents. The 2019 OSBA Fall Conference takes place October 25th through 27th in Florence, OR.

**Let’s talk about Bees!!!**

Noah Clipp, VP of SOBA and owner/operator of Noah’s Bees & Products (https://www.facebook.com/noahsbees/), presented about late winter/early spring hive prep. By this point, most queens should be beginning to lay eggs, and some colonies may even have some capped brood developing. Because of this increase in population, the colony is starting to burn through its food stores. Noah recommends assessing how much honey remains by checking the weight of the hive by performing a “heft test”. To do this, simply reach under the back of the hive, under the bottom board, and tilt it to judge the weight. This takes some practice and experience, but in general a heavy hive has plenty of stores remaining while a lightweight hive needs to be fed so it doesn’t starve before the first honey flow starts. Feed with sugar (ultrafine or Drivert® is best, not powdered confectioner’s sugar), candy boards, or add frames of honey saved from the previous year (if you have them).

During relatively warm days when the bees are actively flying (at least 48 degrees Fahrenheit, sunny) your hive can be subjected to a brief inspection. Do not break the top propolis seal (the seal created between the lid/inner cover and the top super) since it affords the colony some water resistance. When inspecting, check for signs of a queen (i.e. eggs or young larvae present) and for signs of mites. This is a good time to treat for mites using either Apivar (amitraz) or oxalic dribble/vapor. Most of the other available treatments are not very effective in low temperatures. Read and follow all directions for any treatment.

Noah describes a scenario where he increases the odds of small hive survival through winter/early spring. These small hives are defined as very small colonies of one to three frames of bees in a single box/nuc. Anything less than one frame of bees is not worth saving and can be combined with a larger colony (so long as disease/mites are not a major factor in the colonies decline). Small colonies/nucs can be overwintered over a hot pad with a piece of flat polystyrene (rigid insulation, sold at most home improvement stores) between the bees and the hot pad. The entire assembly can be placed along the outside wall of a house to provide a windbreak. Using a wall with a southern exposure will also be of benefit.

Now is also a great time to get new equipment if you need it, and to cull old nasty frames. Clean old unused equipment, scrape off burr comb, sterilize if necessary, and plan plan plan! Do you need new frames? Do you need a new veil? Are any of the nuts on your smoker loose and need to be tightened? Make a list and do what you need to do now, because when the honey starts flowing in the coming months you may not have as much free time.