

Chinquapin Organic Gardens Advisory Board Meeting Minutes Sept. 21, 2021

The Sept. 21 Board meeting was held via Zoom. Participants included: Richard Dorrier-Chair, Anne Saul-Vice Chair, Lori Hartmann-Secretary/Treasurer, other board members Julie Le, Elizabeth Charles, Brad Kukuk and Kathryn Long. Absent: Board members Tammy Preston Boyd and Ed Mensh. Other gardeners attending: Margie Heins, Gretchen Schreiber, Zion Bezu, Sook Park, Ulyses Guerrero, Salma Ahamed, Dona Lee, Margie Lomax, Stacey Potosnak and Deborah Levi. Also absent: Oscar Mendoza - City Recreation, Parks and Cultural Activities liaison.

The meeting began at 7:04 p.m.

Motion by Anne to approve July 20 minutes and seconded by Elizabeth. (There was no board meeting in August as there was a donut and coffee gathering instead.)

City Liaison Report: Oscar was not present, but Richard reported that Oscar apparently has appointed one of his managers to help with Community Gardens administration going forward. Richard will talk to Oscar about her responsibilities. (The city is not funding the dedicated horticulturist position.)

Garden updates:

1. There have been repeated spigot repairs and the city is installing bollard type posts to protect the spigot when they have time. These will include individual cutoff valves so that we don't have to turn off water at the main valves (which affects large sections of the gardens).
2. The dead tree near the shed has yet to be removed. (It was reported 8/25/21. Richard will follow up with the city arborist.
3. Richard reported incurring about \$40-\$50 in expense for lawnmower parts and gas.
4. We discussed requests to the city for this year or the next 2022 fiscal year. These will be expenses incurred by the city, not the gardeners.
 - a. Pothole repair on the access road.
 - b. Steps by the basketball court that are taped off need to be repaired.
 - c. The basketball court needs some kind of sloping runoff to reduce the accumulation of soil runoff

5. Richard suggested we put together gift basket for the T&ES trash/yard waste pickup drivers like we did last year. The estimated cost would be \$100 for snacks and Chinquapin Gardens merchandise. Richard said that the pickup has been more consistent than it was last year. As a side note, Anne reported that the RPCA removed a pile of trash and cut back weeds in the beehive area. (This was RPCA and not T&ES.)

Volunteer reports:

Monitoring: The third monitoring session was held on July 31. Of the 172 currently rented plots, 130 had no violations, which is down from 145 in June. Of those with violations, three were cited for lack of activity, one of which was cited for the second time. The city forfeited the plot after the gardener failed to respond to two-week's notice to take care of it. Seventeen plots were cited for weeds, which is up from eight in June. Anne noted that that is not unusual for this time of year. She also said that vegetation and flowers in a some plots was falling into paths. There are now seven vacant plots, which are being cleared and covered in preparation for the 2022 season.

The next monitoring session is October 16 which is the fourth of the season. The last one will be in Dec. 4 after the close of the season to make sure gardeners have cleaned up their plots unless they plan to garden over the winter. (Volunteer hours for the December session count towards the 2022 season requirement since it takes place after the Nov. 30 season end.)

Plot Markers: Kathryn reported that marker painting and lettering is ongoing.

Volunteer hours: Anne reported that 40 gardeners who agreed to volunteer have completed zero hours of volunteer time. There still are opportunities for gardeners to meet the requirement to avoid paying the volunteer opt-out if they want to return next season. The tasks are listed in the kiosk next to the shed and includes 5 out of 7 abandoned/vacant plots that need to be cleared and covered in preparation for the 2022 season. The deadline for gardeners to complete their volunteer hours and avoid paying the opt-out fee is Nov. 30.

Other Reports:

Finances: We have a bank balance of \$898.63. Elizabeth's expenses have been reimbursed, but Richard's for the lawnmowers have not.

Fundraising: We should consider a winter fundraising campaign since we don't have another planned campaign until the 2022 spring social. Michelle is not on the call so we are not sure if any revenue is coming in from Cafepress purchases. We discussed emailing gardeners about the Cafepress website closer to the holidays to get more sales.

Food bank: (Powerpoint presentation) The Food Bank team represented by Dona, Stacey, Margie and Deborah proposed asking the RPCA to set aside two plots for exclusive food bank use in 2022.

Unlike last season when there were vacant plots dedicated for this use, there were none this season, although the group was able to use three plots that gardeners were unable to work because of health or other issues.

The group reported that the program has been very successful and popular with the gardeners. In addition to donating about \$1,000 in supplies for the plots and 1,000 hours of volunteer time, the group has made 18 deliveries (as of Sept. 18) of 8-12 large boxes of vegetables to the Mother of Light Food Bank, which has delivered nearly 500,000 pounds of food as of August 2021. Our consistent donations also earned them a high nutritional rating among food banks.

The Food Bank group said that having dedicated plots allows them to build up the soil and have a longer growing season, which produces more vegetables for the food bank as the individual gardener donations are not enough to make much of an impact.

The group said while dedicating plots would deprive two on the waiting list (currently 60 residents and 10 non-residents) from having plots next season, the goodwill generated by the community outreach would more than offset any criticism and would be a huge benefit to RPCA's reputation in the city.

There aren't any suitable non-plot locations, such as edges or patches that are good for gardening.

Brad, who has been a long-time gardener, noted that other gardeners have tried donation programs in the past, but that they never worked until now, so we should tout our success to make this a long-term program. The project also is evidence that we are not a self-serving organization, and we don't deserve to be labeled as such by the city when categorizing us for revenue/fee analysis.

Action item: Richard will call Oscar and offer to have Dona and her group make the same presentation to the RPCA.

New business:

2022 season plot renewals: Anne reported the city should be sending out the renewal applications to gardeners starting in October. The deadline to renew is Nov. 30.

Parking on the loop road: Now that the high school has returned to in-person learning, parking on the loop road is limited on school days from 6:30 a.m. – 3:30 p.m.. Parking is by permit only to students with the exception of a small stretch from the entrance to the parking pad and the gate by G9 where parking is limited to 3-hours. It was suggested that an email be sent to all gardeners as the restriction is being enforced. Anne also suggested gardeners avoid entering/exiting the loop road between 8-8:30 a.m. and 3-4 p.m. when students are entering/exiting or being dropped off/picked up to avoid being caught in a traffic jam.

Earthbrew Compost: Brad reported that Earthbrew compost should be available for sale starting in October. He will contact Eric Steiner by the end of September to confirm this. It was also suggested that we ask him if he would be willing to donate to the food bank plots should the city approve those. (Eric did donate in the Spring of 2020, but we reimbursed him for the Fall delivery as we don't want to take advantage of his generosity.)

The meeting was adjourned at 8:30 p.m.

Upcoming events:

Oct. 16 -- monitoring

Oct. 19 -- next board meeting