

Chinquapin Organic Garden Board Meeting -- February 17, 2026

The February 17, 2026, board meeting was held via Zoom. Present: Richard Dorrier-Chair, Anne Saul-Vice Chair, Lori Hartmann-Secretary/Treasurer and other board members, Stacey Potosnak, Elizabeth Charles and Julie Le. Board members absent: Brad Kukuk and Kathryn Long. Other gardeners attending: Siena Loprinzi, Deborah Levi, Natalie Frank, Zion Abebe, Sharon Vannucci, Naima Kearney, Eva Bastianon, Patty Enneking, Faatimah Muhammad, Tina O'Hara and Chelsea Redman. Also attending: the City of Alexandria Recreation, Parks and Cultural Activities liaison: Natural Resources Manager Katrina Napora.

The meeting started at 7:00 p.m. Richard clarified that in the January 13 minutes, the expenses for gas and supplies were actually from the fall, but not reimbursed until December and so appeared in the January financial report. Elizabeth moved to approve the January 13 Board meeting minutes. The motion was seconded by Anne, and the minutes were approved.

City Report: RPCA liaison Katrina Napora reported that Richard's request to move community gardens to Tier 3 of the RPCA master plan needs to go through Judy Lo who manages tiered designation for the RPCA. Richard explained that park facilities charges are calculated on a tiered pyramid cost basis and that community gardens are in top tier (Tier 5), along with programs requiring rental fees, such as the pavilion, which carry a higher fee. He said that he and Anne made the case for moving community gardens to Tier 3: programs in partnership with the City that benefit the whole community, such as the food bank project. He said that the RPCA would be updating the cost-basis program at a Feb. 19 meeting, but that he is unable to attend. Anne explained that when the pyramid system was created several years ago, community gardeners were going to be charged much more for plots until we created the Memorandum of Understanding with the RPCA which set the plot rentals at a lower level in exchange for gardeners taking over work previously done by city employees. Richard said that our placement on the pyramid could still become an issue if the city decides to raise the rental fees in the future, which is why we want the community gardens placement lowered to Tier 3. Sharon asked if the City could grant us non-profit status? Anne explained it could not. She and Richard explained that we had looked into getting non-profit status years ago, and that we decided it wasn't worth the hassle as we did not want to manage plot rentals.

Regarding this season's plot rentals, Anne reported there are currently four vacant plots and that they will be offered to those on the waiting list.

Maintenance: Richard reported that the City has completed construction of new compost bins next to the lower mulch bins and that Dona Lee (M6) will be managing the project. Dona explained the project was started by former gardener Andy Bily, and that gardeners who contributed vegetable scraps to the piles could reap some of the finished product. The bins were constructed to provide a more organized system, and Dona said she is preparing details for those who want to participate. Richard suggested that Dona present the composting program during the new gardener orientation Zoom program on March 18.

Faatimah said she would like to invite the 28 new gardeners to participate in the Master Gardeners' "Introduction to Vegetable Gardening" two-session program Feb. 27 and March 6 via Zoom. She said the sessions would be recorded.

Finances: Lori reported there is \$896.44 in the bank account.

Fundraising: Richard said the Bingo night fundraiser at Beeliner Diner might be rescheduled for early March, and that he would contact Brad, who was absent, regarding another date.

Social Activities: Elizabeth suggested that the new gardener Zoom program scheduled for March 18 be rebranded to include returning gardeners, perhaps renaming it "New and Returning Gardeners" informational session, or "Boot Camp." The Board tentatively set the Spring Social for April 25 and the summer picnic for August 8. Elizabeth will confirm these dates in March when she books the pavilion with RPCA.

New Business: Anne reported that the RPCA removed trees in vacant plots, at our request, although one was mistakenly removed from a rented plot. She said the revised regulations effective 2027 prohibit trees in plots, although those that currently have trees are grandfathered in. She also said that the regulations will ban invasive plants. Katrina said she will informally monitor for invasive species that she finds planted in the garden. She said it is an educational campaign, to offer alternatives to invasives, not to punish gardeners. Anne asked Katrina to provide a presentation about the invasives at the March 18 New/Returning gardeners session.

The meeting adjourned at 7:55 p.m.

Upcoming 2026 events:

March 18 - new and returning gardeners informational session via Zoom (in lieu of March 17 Board meeting)

April 21 - Board meeting

April 25 - Spring Social (tentative)

August 8 - Summer Picnic (tentative)