

## **Chinquapin Organic Garden Board Meeting -- January 13, 2026**

The January 13, 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, Kathryn Long, Elizabeth Charles and Julie Le. Board members absent: Brad Kukuk. Other gardeners attending: Kirsten Fehrenkamp, Siena Loprinzi, Deborah Levi, Jib Vimuktalob, Jennifer Penoso, Natalie Frank, Zion Abebe, Sharon Vannucci, Juli Hedrick, Naima Kearney, Jean McKean, Dona Lee, Lynda Rudd and Margie Heins. 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. Anne moved to approve the December 2, 2025 Board meeting minutes. The motion was seconded by Elizabeth, and the minutes were approved.

**City Report:** RPCA liaison Katrina Napora reported changes in the RPCA Community Gardens regulations concerning the planting of trees and invasive plants. She said trees will no longer be allowed unless grown in pots, although plots that currently have trees will be grandfathered in. She said the reason for the prohibition is that the city has had to remove several large, overgrown trees, which is costly. She also said that invasive plants will not be allowed and that she will monitor the plots twice each season and notify the gardeners whose plots have them. She said RPCA has an extensive list of invasive plants on its website but that she will provide a shorter list of the most common invasives found in the gardens. Anne suggested including this subject in the new gardeners workshop in the Spring. Katrina said the new regulations will take effect for the 2027 growing season as the 2026 regulations had already been distributed with the plot renewals applications. Richard asked the Board members to review the revised regulations and let him and Anne know if there are any concerns.

Katrina also reported plot renewals for the 2026 season are being processed and that vacant plots are being offered to those on the waitlist. Anne said she had just received a list of the plot assignments and that there were 12 newly assigned plots, 8 offers with no response, and one error listing a gardener who isn't renewing. She said she has asked for a list of returning gardeners who have not paid so that she can remind them to pay. She said many invoices were not sent out until after the Dec. 15 deadline and that they are confusing because they are labeled "receipt" rather than "invoice" and they do not include instructions on how to pay.

Katrina said the RPCA has been working on its Natural Resources website and there are a lot of plans for Earth Month (April). Anne suggested including an overview of the website at the new gardener program in the Spring.

**Maintenance:** Richard reported that in December the City removed two fig trees from plots, one by mistake. Other trees were removed from a third plot, and a large trellis was removed from a fourth as the gardener gave up his plot. The gardener who lost her fig tree said the City also removed all of her asparagus, and questioned how this could have happened. (Her plot is next to the one that had been designated for tree removal.) Richard said he wasn't informed as to

when the work was to be done so that he could supervise it and that he will talk to the gardener about possible remedies.

Richard said the city also repaired the retaining walls at P1 and P2 along the sidewalk and that they would be building new compost bins at the lower end of the gardens. Dona will manage the composting program as the gardener who did it before has moved away. No new compost will be accepted until the bins are built and Dona provides guidance.

**Volunteers:** Richard announced that the city was asked to allow time spent on the Food Bank project to be accepted as volunteer hours, and the City agreed. He said he hoped this will encourage more gardeners to participate. Stacey said she will run the program again this year, and that she and Dona will provide lists of tasks for the two designated Food Bank plots. Anne noted that only work done in the two FB plots can be credited, and not work in personal plots simply because gardeners are donating their crops.

**Monitoring Report:** Anne reported that the monitoring team conducted the fifth and final review of the season on Dec. 7, the focus of which was end-of-season cleanup. Of the 156 rented plots (19 were vacant), 107 had no violations, which is an improvement from the 103 in October. Twenty-five were cited for inadequate end-of-season cleanup, and 32 were cited for rotting crops. In nearly every case the crops were tomatoes and peppers, which had died back during a freeze a few days earlier. (These are crops that could have been harvested and donated to the Food Bank before they rotted.) Six plots were cited for fencing leaning into paths and seven were cited for standing water. While mosquitoes are not an issue this time of the year, standing water does attract rats, which are becoming an increasing problem in the gardens. Gardeners need to make sure that tubs and pots are turned upside down and that plastic sheeting is pulled tightly and punched with holes to drain rainwater. Anne also thanked gardener Sharon Vannucci for her assistance with the program.

**Finances:** Lori reported there is \$896.44 in the bank account. This is down slightly from last month as there were some expenses for gas and supplies.

**Fundraising:** Richard mentioned that the flyer for Jan. 29 Bingo night fundraiser at Beeliner Diner was sent out with the notice of the meeting. Julie reported that the hours are from 6:00 - 8:30 p.m. and that the gardens will receive 10% of all customer proceeds during those hours. Richard suggested that the winter restaurant fundraiser be scheduled later in the season.

**Social Activities:** The board tentatively set the Spring Social for April 25 and the summer picnic for August 8. Richard recommended the earlier date in August because the tomatoes don't always last until the end of month, which affects the number of tomato contest entries. It also was decided to hold the new gardeners Zoom program on March 18 and to cancel the March 17 Board meeting.

The meeting adjourned at 8:00 p.m.

**Upcoming 2026 events:**

January 29, 2026 - Bingo fundraiser at Beeliner Diner

February 17 - Board meeting

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

April 25 - Spring Social (tentative)

August 8 - Summer Picnic (tentative)