Chinquapin Organic Garden Board Meeting -- September 22, 2026

The September 22, 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 and Julie Le. Board members absent: Elizabeth Charles and Brad Kukuk. Other gardeners attending: Zion Abebe, Bill Madden, Beth Madden, Jennifer Penoso, Faatimah Muhammad, Anne Brophy, Margie Heins, Juli Hedrick, Jennifer Dorning, Tina O'Hara, Sally Richards and Ela Macander. Absent: City of Alexandria Recreation, Parks and Cultural Activities liaison: Natural Resources Manager Katrina Napora.

The meeting started at 7:00 p.m. Julie moved to approve the July 28 Board meeting minutes. The motion was seconded by Anne, and the minutes were approved.

City Report: RPCA liaison Katrina Napora was absent. Anne suggested that in the future she be asked to provide a written report if she can't attend, and Richard said he will ask her for to do that. Anne reminded everyone that the City's Tons of Trucks event on Saturday Sept. 26, and that the loop road will be closed until 2 or 3 p.m.

Maintenance: Richard reported that wood chips are available in both bins and that he will order leaf mulch for the other bins, as Leaf Gro deliveries are finished for the season. He also said he replaced the lockbox on the shed at a cost of $37, and that it has the same combination as the old one. Richard said he ordered new boards for the paths and more plot markers, and was hoping the path leveling could be done before November 1. Finally, he reported that Bill will help haul the large trash items, possibly next week.

Monitoring Report: Anne reported that 10 gardeners conducted the third monitoring review of the season on August 15. Of the 169 rented plots (four are vacant), 108 had no violations, which is down from the 123 in June, but not unusual given the time of year when the heat is oppressive. Seven plots showed no sign of activity and were very weedy, and three of those were in the same condition in June. It was recommended that the RPCA give those three gardeners two weeks to clean up their plots or forfeit them. Anne checked the plots after the two-week deadline and one was being worked, but the other two showed no sign of improvement. RPCA has been notified, but the status of the two plots is unknown. Another 19 plots were cited for weeds, which is an increase over the number cited in June, but again not surprising because of the heat. Twenty four were cited for path maintenance – an improvement over the 34 in June. This time of year we also see more rotting crops, and six were cited for that infraction. It's an issue because the rotting veggies attract rats, which has become an increasing problem at the gardens. Gardeners were reminded that if they are unable to harvest their crops in a timely manner that they donate to the food bank whose volunteers will harvest for them. The next monitoring session is scheduled for October 10.

Volunteer Projects:

Food Bank: Stacey reported that there has been good volunteer support for tending the two food bank plots and that this year's crops were very successful. She also said there will be no collection on Sept. 26 because of the Ton of Trucks event and that the season's collections would wrap up at the end of October. Stacey also reported that she'd been contacted by the city's Food Insecurity Coordinator Harumi Riley who wants to learn more about our Food Bank project. Stacey said they will meet on October 9.

Plot markers: Team leader Joy Cameron was not at the meeting, but Anne said Joy reported by email that at a Sept. 12 work session 115 markers were replaced and that 41 more were identified for replacement. Joy said she was testing spray silicon to seal the tops of the markers which tend to split when being hammered in, and that some already painted markers she found at Home Depot also were used. Richard said those are designed for interior use and would not last outside. He said he found a PVC alternative at Home Depot that he would discuss with Joy.

Other: Anne reported that there are four vacant plots, and that volunteers have cleared and covered three of them. She said she anticipates there will be more before the end of the season.

Community Outreach: Zion reported that on July 29, 25 children from her church attended a workshop at the gardens, and that Deborah Levi, Jennifer Penoso, gardener and Mother of Light Board member Antonella Pianalto and Alexandria City High School student Lorenzo introduced the children to the gardens, beekeeping, composting, the food bank and the high school gardens. Zion said that as a result of the visit, the church has started its own small garden. She also reported that a boys group from her church would be helping clean up the food bank plots on Oct. 17.

Finances: Lori reported there is $1,895.72 in the bank account. Anne said this was boosted by a very generous contribution from Mark Condon's widow Nancy.

Social Activities: Elizabeth was absent, but Richard reported that 40-45 people attended the August annual picnic, which was a little less than last year. He said there were 18 tomato tasting contest entries, and Margie said the earlier picnic date might have been a contributing factor to the increase over previous years. Julie said that several attendees told her they did not miss the raffle as it took a considerable amount of time. She suggested that going forward, we hold a raffle only at the Spring Social, and then evaluate whether we need one in August as well depending on our financial status.

Mark Condon Memorial Plaque: Richard reported that he found a company that would provide a memorial plaque at a cost of $300-$600 to honor gardener Mark Condon (H3) who died earlier this year. Richard said this is the same company that provided plaques for the two benches in the upper end of the gardens. He recommended the $300 plaque, which is similar in size to the one on the Dale May Memorial bench in the lower end of the gardens. The board voted

unanimously to approve spending $300 for the plaque, with the wording to be determined by the board. Richard said that the board cannot establish a memorial for everyone who has contributed to the gardens, but Mark's, like Dale May's, were significant, in that he was instrumental in negotiating our MOU with the city and that he paid half the cost of the shed (with a matching grant from the city). Faatimah and Stacey recommended the Board establish guidelines for future memorials. Faatimah also asked how one can donate to the plaque and Anne suggested using Elizabeth's Venmo account. Richard said that Mark's widow, Nancy, is tending his plot and that she said there would be a memorial service in the Fall.

New Business: none.

The meeting adjourned at 7:53 p.m.

Upcoming 2026 events:
October 10 - garden monitoring
October 20 - Board meeting