

Chinquapin Organic Gardens Board Meeting September 17, 2024

The September 17 Board meeting was held via Zoom. Present: Richard Dorrier-Chair, Anne Saul-Vice Chair, Lori Hartmann-Secretary/Treasurer and other board members Julie Le, Stacey Potosnak, Brad Kukak, Kathryn Long, and Elizabeth Charles. Other gardeners attending: Jib Vimuktalob, Mary Connolly, Elizabeth Madden, Bill Madden, Neal Fine, David Mendez, Sook Park, Sally Richards, Ulyses Guerrero, Brian Cohen, Eva Bastianon, Margie Heins, Sonia Samee, Frank Cooper, Naima Kearney, Talia Linneman, Nicola Giardina, Chelsea Redman and Deborah Levi. Absent: Oscar Mendoza, City of Alexandria Recreation/Park Operations.

The meeting began at 7:01p.m. There was a motion by Julie to approve the July 16, 2024, minutes. It was seconded by Anne, and the minutes were approved.

City activities: Oscar was not present but provided the following information, which was read by Richard:

- 1) The City is in the process of hiring for the Natural Resources Manager position. The person selected will be the liaison with the Board. The city extended the application deadline for 10 more days and hopes to make a selection in October.
- 2) The picnic tables by the shed need to be painted, Richard is obtaining City approval. Also, the picnic tables at the upper end of the gardens need to be repaired.
- 3) Oscar will check on materials requested for the path restoration project.

Elizabeth asked for clarification on the City's hiring of personnel. She noted the top three Natural Resources positions are vacant; and asked if the City be filling all three. Richard noted the City is understaffed, and the hiring process is moving very slowly. He doubts all three will be filled at once -- probably one at a time.

Sally Richards asked that the picnic table at the top be moved a little so that the mowers can get around it.

Maintenance Activities: Richard reminded the attendees that if there is a water spigot or pipe leak, the City will fix it promptly, but the leaking hoses are the gardeners' responsibility and we need to ensure that water isn't wasted. Anne noted that there are washers in the shed to fix hose leaks if needed.

Richard reported that there is Leaf Gro compost in the upper bin and the City just delivered leaf mulch in the lower bin. He explained that while they look alike, they are different, and that LeafGro is a soil conditioner, while the leaf mulch is used to keep down weeds and conserve moisture in the soil. He also said that a few wheelbarrows have been fixed and other, another one with a broken handle will be fixed.

Monitoring Report: Anne provided the monitoring team report for the third review of the season, which was conducted on Aug. 25. Of the 172 rented plots (one was vacant), the team reported 126 had no violations. This is up slightly from 123 during the second monitoring session. Six plots showed no sign of activity and were very weedy. Of these, two were repeats from the June

monitoring session, but the gardeners cleaned them up after that warning, so are not in danger of losing their plots. One of the gardeners gave up her plot on Sept. 11. Another 19 plots were cited for weeds, which is up from 10 in the previous review, and 24 for path maintenance. There also were 7 citations for crops exceeding plot boundaries – primarily mint and perennial flowers – and improvement over the 16 cited in June. Four plots were cited for rotting crops – which is not many for this time of the year. The next monitoring session is scheduled for Oct. 12.

Brian asked if the weeds cited were in the plots or in the paths. Anne replied in the plots.

Food Bank: Stacey reported that the food bank had a really great summer, but that things are slowing down some. The volunteers moved the Sept. 21 collection to Friday Sept. 20 because of the city's Ton of Trucks event which closes the loop road. She also noted they had one volunteer who is a student at Virginia State University and in an Urban Agriculture certificate program. The program is in partnership with Virginia Tech and the volunteer is getting her hours working with the food bank program. The food bank team answered a questionnaire from the university and the food bank program was approved for the student's internship hours.

Anne noted that on Sept. 22 from 3-4:30 there is an event at the high school honoring Noah Lyles. There will be some outside activities and the road may be closed so best to avoid the area that afternoon.

Stacey suggested to Anne that she remind everyone that they should report all of their volunteer hours – not just the four that are required as the total number of hours contributed by the gardeners are used as metric of volunteer work reported to the City. (Each hour is worth \$33.38, which is the official state value.)

Finances: We have \$892.30 in the bank. This includes money from the picnic, except for the electronic funds that Julie received.

Summer Picnic –Elizabeth said she updated the supply chart after the picnic to adjust the amount of food consumed as a basis for next year's event. Julie noted that \$505 was collected for the raffle, which was a new single day collection record. Richard noted that two city council members attended as well as a representative from the Mother of Light Food Bank. He also thanked Brad for doing the grilling. He said the smaller number of garden awards was a good change. Elizabeth agreed that the one tomato award worked out great a sthere were only eight entries. She also noted that fewer garden awards meant more time for everyone to talk to each other and enjoy the food. Elizabeth will discuss with Anne a replacement for judging next year since Kirsten is retiring in January. Anne noted that the master gardeners did the judging this year, and not Kirsten, and it worked out well, so perhaps they could do it again next year.

Fund Raising – Richard noted that the next fundraiser, sponsored by a local restaurant, will be in the winter. Julie reported that she will start looking for places in October and will report back when she has some information.

New Business: None.

The meeting adjourned at 7:35 p.m.

Upcoming 2024 events:

October 12 – Garden Monitoring

October 15 – Board meeting

November 30 – Official end of the season