

Chinquapin Organic Gardens Board Meeting January 16, 2024

The January 16, 2024 Board meeting was held via Zoom. Present: Richard Dorrier-Chair, Anne Saul-Vice Chair, , other board members: Julie Le, Stacey Potosnak, Elizabeth Charles, Kathryn Long and Brad Kukuk. Absent: Lori Hartmann-Secretary/Treasurer Other gardeners attending: Deborah Levi, Sharon Vannucci, Sook Park, Kirsten Fehrenkamp, Jean McKean, Margie Heins, Neal Fine, Ulyses Guerrero, Mimi Murphy, Siena Loprinzi, Chelsea Redman, Zion Bezu and Nicola Giardina.

The meeting began at 7:02 p.m. There was a motion by Julie to approve the November 21, 2023 minutes. It was seconded by Elizabeth, and the minutes were approved.

City Report: Absent representation from the Recreation and Parks Department, Anne reported on the renewal/payment operation since she has been working on them with Tonja Walls, an RPCA division chief. Anne said that everyone who planned to renew submitted their applications by the Nov. 30, 2023 deadline, but there have been issues with the invoicing and payment process as none of those from RPCA have ever done this before, so Anne had to tell them how much to charge each gardener. The payment deadline was extended from Dec. 15 to Jan. 15 because of the late invoicing. Anne said Tonja reported that day that seven payments had not been received, although Anne said there were actually only two as others had paid by check or were having system issues. She said that technically, the two who didn't respond to any reminders have lost their plots since they missed the deadline unless there are extenuating circumstances. She also reported that there are only 17 (possibly 19) vacant plots, which is lower than the usual 25 or so. She said that Tonja has already sent notices offering the vacant plots to people on the waitlist. That list totals at least 60 residents, which means there's a three-year wait for garden plots. Richard reported that our liaison Rod Simmons resigned at the end of the year and that RPCA Division Chief Oscar Mendoza would be serving as interim coordinator. Richard said that Oscar told him they were working to hire a new Natural Resources Coordinator who would also be responsible for the community gardens. He said Oscar told him the position would be filled by the Spring, although he is doubtful they'll make that deadline. Anne said we should sit down with the person who will be handling renewals and invoicing next year and explain the process to him/her. She also said the city could do a better job of communicating with the gardeners such as acknowledging receipt of the renewal applications, which Maureen always did.

Board and officer elections for 2024: Richard reported that all eight board members agreed to serve again: Richard, Anne, Lori, Brad, Julie, Stacey, Kathryn and Elizabeth and that the following officers also agreed to serve again: Richard as Chair, Anne as Vice Chair and Lori as Secretary-Treasurer. Julie moved to approve the slate, it was seconded by Stacey and the slate was approved.

End-of Season Monitoring Report: Anne reported that the monitoring team conducted the fifth and final review of the season on Dec. 2. The primary focus of this review was end-of season cleanup. Of the 156 rented plots (14 were vacant), 128 had no violations, which is an improvement from the 115 cited in Oct. One plot showed no sign of activity and was very weedy, which is down from three in October. However, this was a repeat violation, so the gardener was given two weeks to correct the problems or forfeit her plot. She failed to correct the

problems, and we recommended forfeiture; unfortunately, the city never forfeited the plot – apparently based on an email from the gardener which focused on one of the minor issues only (and which the monitoring leader never saw until the forfeiture recommendation) The gardener was allowed to renew for the 2024 season. Another 12 were cited for inadequate end of season cleanup. Fourteen plots were cited for weeds, which down from the 28 cited in the October review. Eight were cited for path maintenance, which down substantially from the 21 cited in October. In large part, both of these reductions are due to the fact that weeds are dying back and going dormant because of the cold weather. Six plots were cited for rotting crops, which is an improvement over October.

Volunteer Activities: Richard reported that he and some volunteers helped with path leveling and sorting the large trash, which the city has since picked up. He also said he would work with gardener Al Havinga this winter to repair a couple of broken wheelbarrows. Anne said the 2024 volunteer opportunities list would be sent out after the official start of the new season in March.

Finances: As she was absent from the meeting, Lori reported via email that we have \$876.82 in the bank account, which is the same amount as November.

Fund Raising: Julie reported that she is finalizing the restaurant fundraiser at &pizza in the Bradlee Shopping Center. The tentative date is February 27, 2024. Julie said she ran into a hiccup in that the business wants a tax-write-off and since we do not have non-profit status, the restaurant would have to pay the RPCA and RPCA would then have to send a check to us. Julie said she was trying to reach Lucretia Murphy who is the ParknerShip coordinator about arranging the payment, but hadn't received a response. Richard said he could contact Oscar if Julie continues to have a problem. Julie also explained the restaurant fund-raising process to new meeting attendees: People can order either eat-in or takeout by using a password that the restaurant will provide and that 25% of the proceeds from those sales will go back to Chinquapin. She said a code will be on a flyer to be sent out a couple of weeks before the event. She reported that last year we netted \$496 from a similar fundraiser.

Social Events: The board set the dates for the Spring Social – April 27 -- and the Summer Picnic – Aug. 24. Elizabeth will reserve the pavilion for the two events on March 1, which is the earliest date the RPCA accepts facility reservations. The board also set the new gardener Zoom session for March 26. Elizabeth will check with Master Gardener Dona Lee to see if she will participate again.

Other Business: Stacey and Margie reported that we would be getting 32 packs of specialty flower seeds from Floret Flower Farm that we can plant in the common areas of the gardens and offer to any gardeners who would like them. The Floret program is focused on donating seeds to schools, community gardeners and individuals who cannot afford their own.

The meeting adjourned at 7:56 p.m.

Upcoming events:

February 27, 2024 (11 a.m.–8 p.m.) – fundraiser at &pizza, Bradlee Shopping Center

March 1, 2024 – Official start of the gardening season

March 19, 2024 – next board meeting

March 26, 2024 – New gardener welcome/information session via Zoom

April 27, 2024 – Spring Social

August 24, 2024 – Annual Picnic