

Chinquapin Organic Gardens Board Meeting July 16, 2024

The July 16 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 and Kathryn Long. Absent: Elizabeth Charles. Other gardeners attending: Lynda Rudd, Tina Ohera, Brian Cohen, Jean McKean, Jennifer Penoso, Naima Kearney, Margie Heins, Patty Enneking, Zion Bezu, Neal Fine, Stephen Honan, Deborah Levi, Vickie Cattaneo, Ulyses Guerrero and Chelsea Redman. Also present: Oscar Mendoza, City of Alexandria Recreation/Park Operations.

The meeting began at 7:00 p.m. There was a motion by Anne to approve the June 25, 2024 meeting minutes. It was seconded by Julie, and the minutes were approved.

City activities: Oscar reported that the Natural Resources position applications closed last week. He said pre-selection will take place next and they hope to have the position filled by the second or third week of August. He said there were 55 applicants. Anne reported that she sent an email to Tonja Walls at RPCA about the two gardeners who have not done anything with their plots, and she wanted to know if Tonja had notified the gardeners that the plots were to be relinquished. Oscar said he will follow up with Tonja tomorrow. Brad said he noticed a slow water leak about halfway down the access road. He said the grass in that area is soft and muddy, even with the rain drought. Oscar said he would put in a work order to have it checked. Richard thanked Oscar for the progress on hiring a new liaison and said that he and Anne would like to meet with the new person to tour the gardens. He also thanked Oscar for the new delivery of Leaf Gro compost that was recently delivered to the upper bin. Richard also said that all the wheelbarrows except one are in working order, and that Al Havinga will fix that one. Brad reported that Kevin Brickhouse replaced one of the boards on the picnic table by the shed.

Volunteer Activities: Richard noted that volunteers continue to water the terrace and perennial beds. Kathryn said it has been too hot for her volunteers to paint and place the remaining plot markers but they will finish up when the weather improves. If any markers need to be replaced she asked that gardeners let her know and she will add them to the list. Anne will be updating the volunteer opportunities list. She mentioned that plot W1, which is vacant, needs to be cleared and covered and there might be two more vacated plots pending Oscar's conversation with Tonja. Richard noted that Faatimah Muhammed has asked that someone replace her as volunteer organizer of the orchard and terrace maintenance and she offered some suggested names.

Finances: We have \$785.65 in the bank. This includes money from the recent restaurant fundraiser.

Fund Raising - Julie reported that the amount raised from Los Tios Grill was \$250 (LT rounded up from \$200) and there was \$50 from a direct donation from someone who could not participate. She said she will invite the Los Tios owners to the picnic so that they can see where the money is going and to meet the gardeners. She said we may want to use them again next year. Richard said it works best using a locally owned restaurant because there are few issues with us not being a 501(c) organization (tax exempt).

Summer Picnic – Richard reminded everyone that the picnic is scheduled for noon-2 p.m. on August 24. Elizabeth is out of town but she left a report. She said she will check the shed for supplies and that we need someone to do the grilling. Brad agreed to do it and Richard said he would get the grill started. Richard also invited Oscar and Tonja to attend and said he will invite the Mayor and City council members. He asked Stacey to invite the Mother of Light representatives. Mary and Faatimah will be asked to coordinate the tomato contest, which has been downsized this year to one category. Flowers will be put on the tables by Lori, Rose Cameron and Antonella Pianalto. Kathryn said she will bring four bags of ice. Setup help also is needed, and Julie said she might need help with the raffle. Anne noted that the plot judging, which is conducted by the master gardener group, will be done next week. She said Extension Agent Kirsten Conrad had knee replacement surgery and can't do it but she has assigned a master gardener who has judged before to coordinate this year's judging and Anne will meet with her Friday to provide instructions. Richard noted the agenda for the picnic will be the same, but he will meet with Anne and Elizabeth to finalize it.

Food Bank: Stacey reported the Food Bank volunteers have been delivering full carloads of vegetables to the Mother of Light food bank every week and that they have harvested extra produce from the plots of vacationing gardeners. She said they could still use some help with packing and tending the Food Bank plots as some volunteers are on vacation the next three weeks. Anne mentioned that the weekly donation reminder mentions this and includes a link to the signup form.

New Business: Richard reminded everyone that Kirsten is retiring and that it would be nice to give her something – such as planting a fruit tree -- to thank her for her help over the years. He said he found a nursery near Charlottesville that had small sour cherry trees that can be ordered online for \$50, but that a locally grown tree will do best here. He also said that apple and peach trees are tricky to grow and they need spraying, but cherries do not require as much care. Since this is not the time of the year to plant, he suggested giving her a card at the picnic as a placeholder and explaining that the tree will be planted later in the Fall. Julie suggested that since we don't place plaques, perhaps naming the tree "Kirsten" would be appropriate. Anne said the existing orchard trees came from a local nursery through funding provided by HITT construction company. Naima asked if we needed more than one tree for pollination, Richard said that tree he is recommending, a sour cherry (Montmorency), is self-pollinating and added that there are other cherry trees at the upper end of the gardens. Zion noted the three cherry trees were planted by the student gardeners and maybe we can find out where they got them. Kathryn said she liked the idea of releasing butterflies but realized that is not an easy thing to do. Richard asked for a vote to approve spending \$100 for the tree. Kathryn made a motion, Anne seconded it, and the Board voted unanimously to approve the funding and to provide a card and flowers to Kirsten at the picnic.

The meeting adjourned at 7:52 p.m.

Upcoming 2024 events:

August 24 – Summer picnic

August 25 – Monitoring

September 17 – Board meeting