

Chinquapin Organic Gardens Board Meeting July 18, 2023

The July 18 board meeting was held via Zoom. Present: Richard Dorrier-Chair, Anne Saul-Vice Chair, Lori Hartmann-Secretary/Treasurer, other board members: Julie Le, Stacey Potosnak, Kathryn Long and Elizabeth Charles. Other gardeners attending: Gretchen Schreiber, Deborah Levi, Sharon Vannucci, Ulysses Guerrero, Natalie Clewell, Jennifer Penoso, Zion Bezu, Carla Brady, Bill Madden, Caroline Kersey, Faatimah Muhammad, Nicola Giardina, Mary Connolly and Sonia Samee. Absent: Board member Brad Kukuk. Also attending: Maureen Sturgill, City of Alexandria Recreation Manager/Park Operations.

The meeting began at 7:01 p.m. There was a motion by Julie to approve the May 16, 2023 minutes. It was seconded by Anne, and the minutes were approved.

City Report: Maureen reported that as a result of the June monitoring, two plots were cited for repeat inactivity and weeds and the gardeners were given two weeks to correct the problems or forfeit their plots. One gardener cleaned up her plot and the other gave hers up. It has been reassigned to someone on the waitlist. Maureen announced that she will be retiring on August 31, and said she enjoyed working with the gardens and the Board. Anne and Richard expressed thanks for all her help; she will be missed.

Maintenance Activities: Richard reported that the lawn mower had been fixed. He found a shop in Annandale that repairs small motors. The weed trimmer was also broken, but Mark Condon has worked on it as he bought it and knows the most about it. It needed a new head, which was bought and replaced and hopefully is working now. Richard emphasized once again, that only authorized users are allowed to use the power equipment and that the lock code for the mowers and trimmer has been changed to prevent unauthorized use. Richard also reminded gardeners not to put large trash items in the black bins, but to place them in the fenced area behind the lower mulch bins so that the city can pick them up. The regular trash pickup was missed during the holiday week but Richard call T&ES when it is missed and has an extra pickup scheduled. Yard waste is usually picked up Wed. or Thurs., and regular trash on Thurs. or Fri. Richard also reported that there is a broken wheel barrow behind the shed but he has a volunteer to help fix it. He reported that gardeners used four loads of Leaf Gro Pro provide by the city and that leaf mulch has now replaced it in the upper bin. Leaf mulch also has been ordered for the lower bin. The wood chips in the upper bin are gone but Davey Tree will bring more when they have some. Gretchen said a gardener donated a garden cart, but it has a flat tire, but that maybe it can be fixed.

Volunteer Activities:

Monitoring Report: Anne reported that the monitoring team conducted the second review of the season on June 10. Of the 173 rented plots, 146 had no violations. She said this is a huge improvement from 131 during the first session in April and the 135 from the June 2022 review. Six plots showed no sign of activity and were very weedy, which is down from 11 in April. Two were repeat violations, so the gardeners were given two weeks to correct the problems or forfeit their plots. (One cleaned up her plot; the other was forfeited and rented to a gardener on the waitlist.) Another five plots were cited for weeds, which is an improvement from the 18 cited in

April. Ten were cited for path maintenance, although most were minor. There also were six cited for plots exceeding their boundaries – primarily, mint, flowers, berry bushes, etc. planted too close to the edge of the plot. The next monitoring session is scheduled for Aug. 12.

Plot Markers: Kathryn Long said that the replacement project is caught up for now, if any markers need replacing, to let her know.

Perennial bed and orchard: Richard noted the Dale May Memorial Grove perennial beds look good and that the terraced beds have been planted with Dona Lee's help. Faatimah noted that the peaches were good this year.

Food Bank: Stacey reported that the Food Bank activity is in full swing and that they are delivering 15 flats of vegetables to the Mother of Light Food Bank every week. She said this is an increase, and they have more volunteers but can still use more help. She thanked Maureen for the city's recent removal of a tree stump near the picnic tables where the volunteers work.

Finances: We have \$863.38 in the bank. Richard has some gas receipts (approx. \$30) to submit.

Fund Raising: Julie reported on the gift registry. She has already received two gifts, a charge card for Home Depot, and one cash donation. Bill Madden asked if what should he do with a donation of something not listed on the registry. Julie said it can listed in the registry and she will contact him to pick it up.

Summer Picnic: The picnic will be on August 26 at the pavilion. Richard noted that the pavilion was supposed to be shut down for repairs this summer (new roof, gutters and painting), but the work was finished early, and is now available for the picnic. Elizabeth is working on a flyer announcing the event and asking for set-up help. Julie has a few raffle items and five empty baskets left over from the Spring Social. Agriculture Extension Agent Kirsten Conrad will be judging the gardens again this year, Anne said. Anne also said she will notify award winners before the picnic that they had won something (although no specifics) in hope that more will come. Richard said he will invite the Mayor and City Council members.

New Business: WTOP radio did an interview and video of area community gardens, which included an interview with Anne and Richard. The Horticulture Society also did an interview, which should come out on Friday July 21.

The meeting adjourned at 7:39 p.m.

Upcoming 2023 events:

August 26 – Summer picnic at the pavilion

Sept 19 – Board meeting