

Chinquapin Organic Gardens Board Meeting March 21, 2023

The March 21, 2023 board meeting was held via Zoom. Participants included: Richard Dorrier-Chair, Anne Saul-Vice Chair, Lori Hartmann-Secretary/Treasurer, other board members: Julie Le, Stacey Potosnak, Elizabeth Charles, Kathryn Long and Brad Kukuk. Other gardeners attending: Deborah Levi, Sharon Vannucci, Jean McKean, Jennifer Penoso, Zook Park, Ulysses Guerrero, Kirsten Fehrenkamp, Faatimah Muhammad, Dona Lee, Zion Bezu, Dee Emory, Ela Macander, Salma Ahamed, Jib Vimuktalob and Sonia Samee. Also attending: Maureen Sturgill, City of Alexandria Recreation Manager/Park Operations.

The meeting began at 7:01 p.m. There was a motion by Stacey to approve the January 17, 2023 minutes. It was seconded by Julie, and the minutes were approved.

City Report: Maureen reported that all of the garden plots have been rented. The information for the 2024 season will go up on the website for those who want to go on the wait list. She said there is a healthy wait list and lots of interest now that the weather is good. The covid signs will be removed. The water will be turned on by mid-April. Richard asked if the weather warms up, can the water be turned on sooner? Anne reminded everyone the water was turned on last year on April 7. It is weather dependent and Maureen can let us know when the date is set.

By-laws: the updated by-laws were circulated to the Board members prior to the meeting. The garden MOU with the city was updated in fall 2022, and we want both to be updated at approximately the same time. Elizabeth thought we might clarify the term "bi-monthly" as it can mean every other month, or twice a month. This will be changed although Anne reminded everyone she notifies the members each time we meet. Richard noted some changes to the by-laws: Board meetings are by Zoom rather than in-person; the nomination of Board members in November of each year; vote for Board members in January of each year; we added the Food Bank Coordinator as a Board member. Anne moved to approve the revised by-laws, it was seconded and the by-laws were approved. Richard will bring copies to the Spring Social for the Board members to sign.

City Compost: Richard reported that he was contacted by the City about a grant they received to participate in a pilot food scrap collection program. The City will collect food scraps and transport them to Maryland where they will be composted by the same company that makes the Leaf-Gro brand. Under the pilot program, the City will supply the finished compost to Chinquapin Community Gardens, along with the other city community gardens. Richard said we need to discuss where to put the product, and how to receive it. They can deliver bulk or bagged product. Some attendees preferred bags as they are easier to carry, but also easier to steal. Richard also mentioned that bulk product could be deposited at the City's Yard at Eisenhower Avenue, but that would be even harder for people to get to it. He also said this product is different from Earth Brew – Earth Brew is a fertilizer, this is a compost/soil conditioner. Leaf mulch is best used for weed suppression. Kathryn asked how many loads we could get and if we should limit how much a gardener can take? Richard said it would be first come, first served. Julie asked if we will be sharing it with the student gardens and/or the Virginia Tech area? Richard said no, we will not have enough for that. Anne said the top bin would be better, as a gardener had 9 bags of manure stolen from their plot in the lower level recently. Kathryn agreed

that bags lend themselves to theft. Anne suggested getting the compost now, as it is needed for planting, then refill bins with leaf mulch later when that is ready. Ela asked if we could get it delivered for the weekend? Richard thinks that it would be delivered mid-week, but they should still be some left for the weekend. Dee asked if Earth Brew would still be available? Anne responded that Eric had shoulder surgery and cannot deliver to individuals plots, but is working to do a bulk delivery, maybe in mid-April.

It was decided to put a bulk load of the compost in the upper bin and the lower bin will continue to be used for leaf mulch, when available.

Maintenance Activities: Richard report that the wheelbarrows were fixed over the winter, and the lawn mowers and weedwhackers have been tuned up. Brightview will be helping with weeding and mulching the Memorial Grove perennial bed on Thursday.

Volunteer Activities: Some paths were fixed on February 24th. Anne reported she is updating the task list and will send it out. She is working on the monitoring program with John Fitch and they hope to have the first session on April 22. Faatimah asked if the list will have the volunteer point of contacts and Anne replied yes.

Finances: We have \$427.95 in the bank.

New Business:

Restaurant Fund Raiser: Julie reported that we made \$495.65 at the Frank Pepes Pizza fundraiser, which is 25% of the total sales which were about \$2,000. Lori will notify Julie when she receives the check. Dee handed out flyers at the door of the restaurant, but most people there were gardeners. Julie asked for garden-themed donations for the upcoming garden raffles. She will meet with Brad to get his contributions. She also suggested we consider an on-line registry, a “wish list” of things we need, so people can donate if they have extras.

New Gardener Zoom Session: Elizabeth will be moderating the Zoom session scheduled for next Monday, March 27. Anne sent out an email with the agenda, she will resend it because some people did not receive it.

Spring Social: Elizabeth requested help to set up the day of the Spring Social, which is a pot luck event with no grilling. She recommends people do soil tests now, and bring the results so that Kirsten can help interpret the results.

Summer Picnic: bad news – the pavilion will be closed starting July for renovations. Richard went to the Rec Center and looked at their party room, it opens to the outside and has a restroom but we would not be able to grill outside. We may be able to rent it and maybe the city will waive the fee because they do so for the pavilion? Kathryn suggested looking into using outdoor tents by the picnic tables. Richard will check again on availability for the Rec Center room and we can decide by email if it will work.

The meeting adjourned at 8:19 p.m.

Upcoming 2023 events:

March 27 -- New Gardener Zoom Session

April 29 – Spring Social

May 16 – Board Meeting
August 19 – tentative - picnic