

Chinquapin Organic Gardens Board Meeting May 17, 2022

The May 17 Board meeting was held via Zoom. Participants included: Richard Dorrier-Chair, Anne Saul-Vice Chair, Lori Hartmann-Secretary/Treasurer, other board members: Elizabeth Charles, Ed Mensh, Brad Kukuk, Stacey Potosnak and Kathryn Long. Absent Board member: Julie Le. Other gardeners attending: Zion Bezu, Deborah Levi, Gretchen Schreiber, Margie Heins, Faatimah Muhammad, Ela Macander, Zook Park, Susan Apgar, Scott Nelson. Also attending: Oscar Mendoza, City Recreation, Parks and Cultural Activities liaison and Maureen Sturgill, Recreation Manager/Park Operations.

The meeting began at 7:02 p.m.

There was a motion by Anne to approve the March 15 board meeting minutes. It was seconded by Elizabeth, and the minutes were approved.

City Update: Maureen said the service road is scheduled to be repaved on June 13. She will remind Richard closer to the start date so that he can notify the gardeners. She is working on getting lumber now for path leveling in the fall. Two plots were given up and Maureen is working on assigning them to people on the waitlist. Both are half plots. She provided an update on the suggestion that the city provide portable toilets at the gardens: the city does not support this. Richard and Anne support the city's decision as the recreation center is open until 9:00 pm and is available for gardeners to use. Portable toilets can bring in problems – smell, vandalism, etc. Brad asked about some metal trash cans that were pushed down the hill near the broken steps leading to the basketball court. Richard said he thought that they were already put back up by the road, and noted that the orange fence is back up around the steps.

Gardens Update: Richard said the water was turned on April 4. The city provided mulch for and weeded the grove area. A broken spigot (hit by a car) was fixed, Richard was able to turn it off the water which was shooting up until the city arrived and fixed it. Earth Brew compost also was delivered recently. More wood chips have been delivered, and more leaf mulch was requested. Strawberries have been planted on the top tier of the orchard. A tiny maple tree was donated and planted by the picnic table where the pine tree died but it will need to be moved slightly. He also said that no additional fruit trees will be added to the orchard at this time.

Food Bank Update: Margie reported that Eric Steiner generously donated Earth Brew compost to the food bank plots.

Monitoring Report: The monitoring team conducted the first review of the season on April 30. Of the 174 rented plots, 119 had no violations. This is down from 142 during the first session of the 2021 season. Thirteen plots showed no sign of activity and were very weedy, which is the same number as April 2021. Another 8 plots were cited for weeds and 39 for path maintenance. The next monitoring session is scheduled for June 4.

Richard talked to a gardener about grass/weeds in the paths as the gardener was unsure how to get rid of it. Anne suggested digging it up, laying down newspaper or cardboard, then putting down a layer of weed block cloth and finally adding wood chips. This seems to work the best.

Gretchen asked how others are weeding all four paths adjacent to their plots – when their neighbors don't weed their side. Anne suggested talking to garden neighbors and working out a plan to share the work. If that isn't possible, she suggested just taking care of your half. Gretchen hoped that leading by example would work.

Volunteer Activities: Faatimah updated efforts in the orchard. She and Leigh DeHaven decided to work in two-week blocks. The trees don't need much water, and the volunteer can monitor the rainfall and water only if necessary. Weeding is each assigned gardener's responsibility for two weeks, at which time he/she will hand it off to the next volunteer. There are a total of six volunteers tending the orchard. They also removed a damaged tree and planted a fig tree in its place.

Richard said that he and Brad planted strawberries in the top tier, and later will plant watermelons and pumpkins in the middle and bottom tiers.

Kathryn and her team are surveying the plot markers as many have rotted and will need to be replaced.

Finances: We have \$1,116.82 in the bank. This includes all money from the Spring Social raffle. Brad asked if we should do another raffle at the Summer picnic. We made \$300 at the Spring Social raffle and there were some really nice items. It was decided that we would see what items we collect for the picnic and then decide whether to have another raffle.

Picnic: Elizabeth said we had a great turnout for the Spring Social -- approximately 35-40 people attended and all seats at the picnic tables were filled. Richard thanked her for doing it. The summer picnic is scheduled for August 13. Elizabeth said she will need more help for it because there is more work, i.e. grilling.

New Business: Oscar said that the bee keeping is getting attention from the community, which is a good way to get the community involved. He said the city may need to expand the program in the future if interest continues to grow. Anne said that the Chinquapin area is small and can only handle five hives, which we already have. When Oscar mentioned possibly rotating the hive area assignments, Anne said that wouldn't be a good idea as hives are expensive and the beekeepers might not have another location for their hives. She suggested perhaps other locations can be developed, including in other parks. Oscar wants to come up with a plan for community hives, such as making sure beekeepers are certified, knowing what types of bees they have, etc.; he will check with other communities to see how they are handling this. Anne suggested that he contact Kami McGlynn, who has two of the Chinquapin hives, as she is president of the Northern Virginia Beekeepers Association and should know other communities that have a hive program.

The meeting adjourned at 8:01p.m.

Upcoming events:

June 4 - inspection

June 21 – Board meeting

August 13 – picnic