

Chinquapin Organic Gardens Board Meeting November 15, 2022

The November 15 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 and Elizabeth Charles. Absent Board members: Ed Mensh, Kathryn Long and Brad Kukuk. Other gardeners attending: Mary Connolly, Deborah Levi, Zion Bezu, Sharon Vannucci, Elizabeth Madden, Bill Madden, Jean McKean, Margie Heins, Jennifer Penoso, Zook Park, Meghan Johnson-Watson, Ulyses Guerrero and Siena Loprinzi. Also attending: Maureen Sturgill, City of Alexandria Recreation Manager/Park Operations.

The meeting began at 7:02 p.m. There was a motion by Julie to approve the September 20 minutes. It was seconded by Anne, and the minutes were approved.

City Report: Maureen reported that some invoices have been sent out to returning gardeners, but the vast majority will be sent after November 30 when the volunteer hours deadline has passed.. There are currently eight vacant plots that she knows of, we won't have a final count until after the Nov. 30 renewal deadline. A reminder to renew will go out two weeks before the due date and Maureen will give Anne the list so she can prod those who may have forgotten to submit their applications. The due date for payment is December 15. Maureen will start contacting people from the waiting list once she knows how many vacant plots we have. Sharon had difficulty with the renewal form, she couldn't fill in all three pages, only page one, so she printed it and mailed it after filling it in. She offered to test next year's form.

Maintenance Report: Richard stated that Al ~~Havi~~Hinga will help fix the broken wheel-barrows this winter. He asked the City to pick up the yard waste, they usually come every week. Bill asked if they only come once a week? Richard replied yes, but in the Spring and Fall we need them to come more often due to all of the gardening activity at those times of year.

Monitoring Report: The monitoring team conducted the fourth review of the season on Oct. 14. Of the 170 rented plots (four were vacant and two are designated for the Food Bank project), 125 had no violations. This is an improvement from the 119 during the August review. Eleven plots showed no sign of activity and were very weedy, which is up from the three in August. One was a repeat from the August review, so the city gave the gardener two weeks to clean up the plot or forfeit it. The gardener complied and brought the plot into compliance. Of the remaining plots, 19 were cited for weeds, although some were fairly minor and it was an improvement over August. Eight were cited for path maintenance – also an improvement over August. The final monitoring session is scheduled for Dec. 3.

Food Bank: Stacey reported that as the food bank closes out its third season, they collected over 10 flats of vegetables and herbs each week. The two Food Bank plots have been planted with cover crops and have had Earthbrew compost added. They are planning for the next season and hope to start gardening earlier next year. Richard asked if they needed any help. Stacey said yes, and if anyone wants to help to let her or the others know.

Dale May Memorial Grove: Richard said the pumpkin patch has had Earthbrew compost added to it and has been planted with cover crops. It did very well this year and will be planted with pumpkins again next year, he said.

Volunteer Activities: Anne noted that there are only two weeks for gardeners to complete their volunteer hours. Twenty-six gardeners have not completed any time and will be required to pay the higher rental fee. Twenty-one others have some hours, but not completed the four-hour requirement, she said.

Path Maintenance: Richard asked Maureen if the City could deliver the boards, and she said they will do that. The work on the paths over the winter will count toward next year's volunteer hours. Richard also said he will need help to sort the large item trash items so that the city can pick them up.

Finances: We have \$764.27 in the bank.

New Business: Richard provided a draft meeting schedule for 2023, with meetings to be held every other month instead of monthly. He said the gardens are running well, and we have a good MOU, so less needs to be done than in the past. We can call a meeting at any time if needed. Elizabeth replied that makes sense and the schedule looks good. Richard stated there are three documents that govern us: the regulations, which the City provides out; the MOU, which is the Board's agreement with the city; and the by-laws. Maureen stated the regulations are sent out with the renewal notices and she will update as needed. Anne suggested looking at them earlier in the season in case changes need to be made. Richard noted that in the past one of the major changes were the fees although Anne said they have been set for the past three years. Maureen said there are no plans to increase the fees in 2024 or 2025, that she knows of. The MOU expires this month and was recently revised to include the food bank plots, and to add Richard as the Chairman. He will update the MOU and he and Anne will sign, then ask the City to sign, but he will send a copy to the Board for approval first. He also stated the bylaws need minor changes, to change that the meetings are now bi-monthly. The website also will need to be updated with this change as well. The by-laws need to be signed by all of the Board members. Richard noted that we can add more Board members if anyone is interested in joining. Ed has been sick but Richard will check to see if he wants to continue. He will also talk to Brad, who missed more than half the meetings. It was suggested to send a calendar invite, so that the meetings are automatically added to everyone's calendar. Elizabeth and Stacey will look into it.

Board officers were nominated tonight with the official vote to take place at the January meeting. All current officers (Richard as Chair, Anne as Vice Chair and Lori as Secretary/Treasurer) have agreed to continue next year. Elizabeth nominated the six remaining members to continue. Richard thanked everyone, and Jean also thanked the Board for all they do.

Sharon suggested having the master gardeners set up some Q and A sessions at the gardens, perhaps once a week, or once a month? Anne suggested using Zoom meetings. Sharon noted that Dona gets lost of questions when she is in the gardens. Anne said it would be up to Dona and the other master gardeners if they want to do it, but the Master Gardener program already has a lot of classes, publications, and information on their website. Anne will send an email

reminding the gardeners of this service. Julie also noted you can go by their office in Fairlington. Anne said we might want to have a session on bee keeping, there is room for 5 hives and we have 4 now with one possible new one. One of the bee keepers is the President of the Northern Virginia Beekeepers Association -- maybe she can give a presentation at the Spring social.

Fundraising: Julie asked for donations for the raffles. Elizabeth noted that now is a good time of year to pick up garden items on clearance. Julie is looking at dates for the winter fundraiser and will have more information at the next meeting.

The meeting adjourned at 8:15 p.m.

Upcoming events:

December 3 – end of season garden monitoring

No December Board Meeting

January 17, 2023, next Board Meeting