

Chinquapin Organic Gardens Advisory Board Meeting October 15, 2024

The October 15, 2024, board meeting was held via Zoom. Present: Richard Dorrier-Chair, Anne Saul-Vice Chair, Lori Hartmann-Secretary/Treasurer and other board members Julie Le, Brad Kukuk, Kathryn Long and Elizabeth Charles. Absent: board member Stacey Potosnak. Other gardeners attending: Elizabeth Madden, Bill Madden, David Mendez, Sook Park, Ulysses Guerrero, Margie Heins, Sonia Samee, Naima Kearney, Nicola Giardina, Deborah Levi, Siena Loprinzi, Zion Bezu, Patty Enneking, Anne Brophy, Lynda Rudd and Nick Ruiz. Absent: Oscar Mendoza, City of Alexandria Recreation/Park Operations.

The meeting began at 7 p.m. There was a motion by Anne to approve the September 17, 2024, minutes. It was seconded by Elizabeth, and the minutes were approved.

City activities: Oscar was not present. Richard and Anne sent him the following questions: 1) has a new garden liaison been hired? Oscar responded that no decision has been made yet but they are now in the interview stage. Anne noted that in July they had 55 applicants. Elizabeth suggested that our gardens may not need to be part of the Natural Resources responsibility, and suggested that Richard ask if another person/office can be in charge? Anne said the liaison used to be the job of the City Horticulturist, but the City has downsized many positions and no longer has an horticulturalist. Richard agreed that once Suzanne (the former horticulturalist) left, we have not had much attention. Maureen Sturgill was very helpful but she retired and then Rod Simmons, her replacement, retired after only a short time overseeing the gardens. Richard said he will relay Elizabeth's concerns to Oscar. Elizabeth noted we need consistent help, not someone with a lot of other jobs. Anne stated management of the community gardens is not a big deal for the city, and agreed we need continuity. Richard also asked whether acknowledgments being sent on receipt of the renewals. Some at the meeting said no, some said yes, that they have received acknowledgments. Anne said the acknowledgment should be automatic as gardeners get anxious if they do not know the status of their application. Richard will follow-up with Oscar on this. Richard asked: when are the invoices sent. Oscar responded that these will be sent around early Nov. As to when the water will be turned off, Richard said Oscar responded the week before Thanksgiving, as long as the weather doesn't get too cold. Anne said a notice will be sent to the gardeners prior to the water being turned off when we get a defined date.

Maintenance Activities: Richard noted there was not much to report since the last month. Some additional work on the wheelbarrows has been completed.

Food Bank: Margie informed everyone they are finished collecting for the season. There is still a little produce in the food bank plots that will be taken mid-week. Anne will send out a notice to gardeners that the collections are finished but individuals may take produce directly to MOL if they have anything.

Volunteers: Richard announced the following coordinators for the Dale May grove, orchard and terraced bed area for next year, since Fatimah Muhammad cannot do it: Richard will coordinate the perennial gardens, Brian Cohen will coordinate the orchard, and Miriam Hacker will

coordinate volunteers for the terraced area. He noted that the picnic tables by the shed are being readied for painting.

Path restoration is being handled by Tracy and Mark Friend and will be done October 26 and November 9. Bill Madden asked why the paths need to be restored and Richard explained that the gardens are on a hill and to prevent erosion, we try to level the paths between the gardens where the slopes are greatest. Elizabeth noted the process requires some digging, cutting and is a physical task. Richard further explained that the City provides the supplies but we provide the labor. Anne also noted that we do the repairs off season so that no damage is done to the plots. Richard replied that we start with the vacant plots (only 2 right now) and that fences make access more difficult. Sometimes we let the plot renters know and ask if it's okay to go into the plots. Kathryn reported that the two volunteers working on plot markers are meeting October 22 to install the next batch of markers.

Richard reminded everyone they have until November 30 to complete their volunteer hours requirement. Anne noted that there are some gardeners who have no hours, she sends them an email with project suggestions. She said some ultimately opt out and pay the higher rental fees. Richard said he could use some help in sorting the large trash items in the lower garden for the city to pick up. And that he wants to do it November 16 or 23 if anyone wants to help.

Finances: We have \$892.30 in the bank. This includes money from the picnic, except for electronic funds. There is also one pending outgoing check for some recent maintenance tasks (approx. \$130).

Fund Raising – Richard asked Julie if she might have something for next month's meeting. She said yes, she is researching options and will report next month.

New Business: Anne reported that the Loop Road will be closed on Sunday, October 20 for an event. Richard noted the yard waste bins were full and he hoped the City would pick up the next day, and perhaps they are behind schedule due to the holiday. Lynda asked if the bins would be empty by Saturday since the gardens won't be accessible on Sunday, Richard said hopefully! Richard noted that at the next Board meeting we will confirm the Board members for the coming year and then vote on them in January.

The meeting adjourned at 7:40 p.m.

Upcoming 2024 events:

October 19 – garden monitoring

November 19- Board meeting (last for this season)

November 30 – garden season officially ends; plot renewal applications deadline

December 7 – year end garden monitoring

Dec. 15 – garden plot payments due