

Minutes of Meeting of the Board of Directors

Sunshine Community Gardens

10/11/22

Attendees: Jim Willmann, Steve Camp, Kerry Drake, Debra Mariano, Carol Limaye, Iris Slevin, Juan Pedro Maestre, Kay McMurry, Marsha Riti

Unless explicitly stated otherwise, any statement is reflective of an individual board member and not the opinion of the Board as a whole.

Meeting called to order at 6:08

Reports By Nonboard Members

1. Plant Sale Report (Marsha and Karl –Karl unable to attend)

Co-coordinator, Marsha Riti, reported that she has been in contact with 3 companies for tents. A contract will be secured this week. Port-a-potties and tent deliveries will be in March.

Gabriel Valley Farm has noted there will be a 5 cent/pot increase this year. Phillip is the GVF contact this year. Other secured coordinators: Mary Drake is the silent auction coordinator. Irina and Steve are the vendor coordinators. It was noted that vendors are self-sufficient; we coordinate their location for set-up. Currently the vendor list is incomplete. Marsha plans to speak with Janet for other ideas.

Susan Wallar will coordinate receipt writers and cashiers. Signs about where to pay will be created by Jim's granddaughter. Randy is the tomato coordinator. He will help unload trucks; he will schedule GVF delivery and be in charge of the tomato tent. He will not be available for the soil mixing. Polly will continue to coordinate the compost efforts. Suzanne will continue as the herb tent coordinator. Suzanne will set the timeline and seed selection and supplies and be the volunteer coordinator. Suzanne will train others this year. There are 9 volunteers for the herb tent.

Marsha spoke with Aaron Mason re. using the TSBVI greenhouse. We can not use their greenhouse because of their COVID precautions. Anita Keys is coordinating refreshments and has been given a budget of \$400. She is in contact with the previous coordinator.

Entertainment: The marching band is not available this year. Marsha contacted two other bands, but only one responded. Kristin Phillips is in charge of publicity. The banner over Lamar Blvd. is reserved. There will be a graphic, social media, and radio time focus. Merchandise is being considered. Susan Prosperie is coordinating the passalongs. Irina will work up signs for tents, as she did for the fall sale. Debra has worked on contacting seed vendors to get permission for their images.

There was some question about whether or not we charge vendors. That will need to be reviewed to make sure we are in tax compliance. It was noted that in the past a vendor donation to the silent auction was the arrangement.

It was noted that Randy has typically been on some shows and may have contacts with Central Texas Gardener. Marsha will check on that.

As a reminder, Brite Ideas gives a discount to Sunshine gardeners.

It is good that people are getting involved. Most are aware of their tasks, and the coordinators are making sure they have what they need. Jen and Jeff have offered to help in some ways if needed—particularly with greenhouse space. Also noted was the need to give consideration to moving away from a single vendor.

2. Audit Committee Status Report (Susan Wallar)

Susan wanted to mention her cross-over on the audit committee along with her role as cashier for the plant sale to ensure there is no conflict of interest. She wanted to make sure she doesn't have the level of access to change the routing. It may be that Carol will need to add the people. Susan wanted to make the board aware of this to make sure she has no possibility of being able to divert funds.

The Audit committee met on Sept 19, 2022. The committee organized and spoke about its purpose. An Audit committee Charter and Plan for 2023 has been created. Both documents were sent to the board. Susan was a bank auditor for many years. It is a bit of a different structure with a non-profit. The National Council of Nonprofits link had a lot of valuable info. The difference here is the general revenues of major financials. The charter lays out the purpose of the committee. Term limits are not in the charter yet because this is the first year of the committee being instituted. For future committee members, the Board will make best efforts to ID volunteers with financial backgrounds, etc. Staggered terms are to be considered. There is a learning process upon the committee's instigation. The committee will meet twice a year and report to the board. The first report would be in the first quarter, and the second report would be in the 3rd or 4th quarter. The committee will consider interim reports. Roles of committee will be consistent with SCG bylaws and the regulatory requirements layed out on procedures.

The committee plan and purpose is to look at the organization's books and records; compliance; and internal controls. The scope of work requires more details, while looking at the two roles of the treasurers, thus the committee will look at these things after a full year. This year, with the additional treasurer role, may have been a year of working out the kinks. Thus far, looking at the policies and procedures, it was noted that they are comprehensive and impressive; Carol did an amazing job. The audit plan will be structured around seasonal activities. January is busy, and the plant sale time is busy, so the committee schedule takes that into account. Debra and Carol will be consulted about the timing and we can adjust as needed. Carol pointed out the consideration of the busiest times for the treasurers is appreciated. The Audit plan will be very comprehensive next year, but as we go forward, we can determine what can be looked at every other year.

Beth and Ila and Kerry (the three other audit committee members) agreed that Susan is doing an excellent job as the committee chair.

Will gardeners be able to review the audit committee? Our records are open to members. A report could be made at the AGM. Reports could be posted online. The AGM is a good idea so that gardeners can send email questions to the audit committee. A link on the website might be provided.

Approval of Minutes (Kerry)

September BOD Meeting Minutes

–Two suggestions: one about formatting and the other about GVF being missnamed.

AG Meeting Minutes

Both Meeting Minutes Approved

Ratification of Email Votes (Kerry)

` Sunshine hours

Waste Disposal

Site rule changes Approved

Routine Reports Treasurer (Debra)

Compost: We are done with the third and final load. We broke even. It worked out well. Financial report: we are pretty much where we were at the AGM: a bit

behind because of the water bill. Waste Mgt. did credit up. So we didn't have a WM bill this month and won't next month. We are behind, but we aren't making any unnecessary purchases. What will be the deficit at the end of the year? Right now we have a \$4,000 deficit. The deficit will increase, likely. If we get rain in the later months then the deficit will not be so large. Special projects: it goes into yearly expenses. We could move it into the next year if we need to. We could move the driveway expense out of this year, but probably best to take the hit this year.

Plot Coordinator (Kay)

Two plots will be open soon. The WL has not really been changing in terms of desired plots. The wait time has gone up a bit.

Plot Compliance (Steve)

Doing better than we were in terms of plot compliance. 2 new Zone co-coordinators. People have been cleaning up; we had 130 cubic yards of brush. There will be a full walk-through late Nov early Dec to assess plot compliance before billing. Zone Coordinators should be in touch with non-compliant gardeners prior to non-compliance letters going out.

Discussion/Action Items

1. Children's Garden Status Report (Kerry)

The plot area has been leveled and cleared of Bermudagrass. Plastic was put down in July and the solarization process has worked well. The 10 3x3 beds have been built by Robert Jarry. We have 7 gardeners who would like to sponsor a child gardener. To be done: put down the bed frames and fill with dirt, fill pathways (granite or wood chips being discussed), and purchase a child-sized picnic table and tools.

2. Austin City Limits Recycling Program Report (Steve, Jim)

ACL has offered 3 or 4 types of lumber 2x4, possibly and corrugated sign boards. We can get some of those to potentially protect tool shed walls. There is also screening mesh and carpet runners. Furniture; fold up chairs, etc. are available. Jim and Steve can pick up items around the middle of next week, potentially. Cedar lumber would be great to have.

3. Gate Operation (Steve)

a. Update if any

Asphalt: a date will be scheduled tomorrow. The electrical lines are done. Gene will get a start date on Friday.

b. We need to set hours to open/close the gate if the automatic closure is operational before the card reader is. Suggested times are 6:00a-10:00p. No vehicle can exit after 10 p.m. until the card reader becomes operational.

4. **Adopt a Fence**

- a. 10-15 gardeners would like to adopt a panel of fence. We can proceed with doing that. People can say what sections they want. We can let the adoptees choose what to grow, subject to approval by the committee. Sunshine would provide the plants (as long as the gardener is planting from the list of approved plants.) We will proceed with the "adopt a fence" program.

5. **Community Work Teams**

- a. We are trying to identify 2-3 areas where we could initiate teams.

- 1) maintaining the area between street and fence and
- 2) clearing overgrown new plots

As an incentive to join a team, it was suggested that initially any gardener joining a team would get credit for 50% of their service hours. 4 people have expressed interest in serving as team leaders. It would likely take 10 members to make a functional team.

There was discussion about whether or not team members would enjoy service hour exemptions without actually performing the tasks. It was suggested that as a launch for this program the exemption would provide an incentive for people to join a team. One suggestion was to keep recording hours as usual, thinking that being on a team might be enough of an incentive. It was pointed out that it is an incentive to be working together as many of the tasks have to be completed by an individual.

Motion: Create two teams, one for fence and street maintenance, and another for plot clearing. As a launch for this season, any team member will get up to half their service hours in order for them to have an incentive to join. The Service hour exemption will be reevaluated after the season.

Amendment: if team members get their half their hours exempted, they have to work the other half outside of their team job.

There was much conversation about whether or not we are creating too many incentives and that needed tasks wouldn't get done. Eventually the motion was withdrawn.

(Note: this issue was revisited and voted on later in this meeting.)

6. **Safeguarding of Personal Information Sunshine Collects on Members (Iris)**

Identify issues, possible steps to take, and minimum steps which should be taken. The board will need to make a "final" decision at the November board meeting.

Iris mentioned the data we can't afford to lose, Essential Data: banking, square for plant sale, and quickbooks, for instance. There is also data that can't be exposed: personally identifying data, such as that of gardener information. There is also nonessential data that often includes general information with non-specific language.

Iris explored the National Council of Nonprofits site and the discussion around data storage. We should consider a consolidation of data storage. There is Non profit data storage availability, and it makes it possible to share in read only mode and offers storage, etc. It is not a large expense, and it can make emails generic.

This could be useful for documents such as the Plot Usage Agreement, and could be helpful for updating the website, and creating alias emails for each board member. We could also have a "Member's Only" section (i.e. greenbinder, etc.) to keep information private. A data compliance audit is not unusual for non-profits. The suggestion of a QR code for recording is a good idea, but it introduces a 3rd party software which is an exposure. Are we opening ourselves up if a QR code is linked to the green binder or paypal? The QR code provider would need to be thoroughly vetted. It was also pointed out that data shared with TSBVI on badges for gate codes will create a cross sharing link.

This is an important topic to consider and discuss. There are lots of new things happening at the garden, and we must protect the data and the garden itself. We should consider adding an acknowledgement in the plot agreement about how member data is used. We must look at how we protect the personal information of gardeners. We have obligations to protect these things. We must consider databases stored on places other than pc's since pc's are vulnerable to being hacked. We must work to protect the personal data we collect.

7. **Operational Manual**

- a. *Review concept and start process of identifying what topics would be covered in an operational manual*

Board members should work to identify what should be addressed in an operational manual. Simple things could be written down, like how we turn off water in a freeze, plot maps, etc. The model we can look at is what Carol did for the financial policies. Does this differ from the handbook? This is the organizational procedural handbook addressing how individuals function within the garden. A copy bound and kept in the trailer and tool shed would be made available so gardeners can find out how you shut the water off, or such. It would be like a common memory book. We need to identify what we want to do in such a manual. Some things are inter-operational and not shared with the general public because it's just too boring :-).

8. New Gardeners' Service Hours (Jim)

- a. Site rules (Rule II.C) provide for new gardeners to earn up to one-half of service hours by clearing plots if overgrown when assigned. Current practice is to let new gardeners earn all service hours other than TSBVI by clearing overgrown plots.
- b. The Board needs to look at the issue and this is a preliminary discussion only. We are near the end of fall service hour season and the number of prorated service hours is small, so the practical effect of current practice is minimal and no need to change it at this time. Long term solutions would be 1) change the rule to fit the practice, 2) change the practice to fit the rule and 3) evaluate the new gardener rule since it is not clear how well it is working. We probably should decide by start of spring service hour season (Jan 1).

We are currently inconsistent with the site rule.

Clearing plots was a burden. Site rules say you can get half your hours for messy plots, but super overgrown plots take more time. New members should be able to get more hours to clear plots when the plot is seriously out of control.

Right now the practice is inconsistent with the rule. We might want to change the site rule. Look at the reason for the rule? It helps get people working outside of their own plot. We should plan to evaluate at a certain time. The real solution is not to let plots get too far out of compliance.

9. Should A Dues Increase Be Considered (Jim)

- a. Preliminary discussion of why we might want to consider a dues increase. No decision needed at this time. Given we have

approximately 230 plots, the revenue produced by an average \$10 dues increase is less than \$2500 a year.

We have not had a dues increase for a significant amount of time. It won't generate income immediately, but it needs to be considered (especially considering the water bill). Produce from a garden can offset the fees, it was suggested. How does this compare to other gardens? Probably we will not make a decision until the annual meeting. It is now on the radar for board members.

Revisiting Community Work Teams (as earlier discussed):

There is a strong interest from gardeners to create work teams. There would need to be a team leader to see the team through and team agreement about task assignments. Team members would work their hours and probably more. If a team member didn't do tasks in the time period allotted, the person would not be invited back on the team.

It was again suggested that as a temporary model, team members would participate and get the benefit of the half their service hours worked.

Amendment to the motion:

Form 2 teams: people joining a team are exempt from recording any service hours. The team leaders will evaluate the work of individual team members and not invite back a member who does not perform his/her tasks.

Motion Passed.

ACGA conference: (JP)

JP reported that it was an amazing conference. The community should try to attend next year. 250 gardeners from all over the southern US were in attendance. The Atlanta delegation had 60 attendees; Texas had 15. It was a very good conference. JP suggested we make an effort next year for a couple of people to go. There were even people from Australia. Perhaps JP could report about the conference at the next AGM. It's a good expenditure to fund attendees. SCG is a tremendous example of success and should consider presenting at the conference. Hosting would be a big endeavor. It can benefit the garden, etc. JP will do a brief report at the next AGM.

One member inquired about working at Bowie High School in a mentorship role around gardening. The mentorship is not associated with Sunshine but the board member wanted to make sure there was no conflict of interest. It was stated that there was no conflict of interest and this is consistent with our 501 c3 to show how we work as a community garden.

Motion to adjourn 8:18.

Motion passed.

Adjourn

