

NEWARK STREET COMMUNITY GARDEN ASSOCIATION

FALL 2018 MEMBERSHIP MEETING

On October 13, 2018, shortly after 10:00 AM, a quorum being present, President Maureen Spagnolo called the meeting to order. (Sign up sheets attached). Maureen introduced board members and officers present, Jane Brookstein, Bill Bonner, Hillah Culman (Treasurer), and Cathy Winer (Scribe). She thanked them and other gardeners who stepped up to take over rules and otherwise help the garden run smoothly despite the challenging weather.

Committee Reports. Hillah presented the Treasurer's report (copy attached – [note to me: save and insert emailed version – if format gets messed up, scan instead.]) She noted that we have a larger than normal balance, which can be used for projects like plumbing . Bill is going to get some bids for upgrading the plumbing. Once we see the bids, there will be discussion on what improvements are fiscally realistic.

Someone asked what percentage of members pay the non-work fee, which prompted a discussion of how to ensure that people who do not pay that fee fulfill their 10 hours obligation. Maureen said that the same few people turn out regularly for work days and urged wider participation to share the load. Failure to perform the ten hours is grounds for having a plot reposessed. One member said that she had indicated a willingness, on the renewal form, to do work but was never contacted. Deborah Linde volunteered to develop a system to keep track of volunteer tasks that need to be done and who has done what. Maureen welcomed her offer. She could be called the Volunteer Committee Chair. Several people suggested that we post a list in the shed of tasks to be done, so people who can't make it to workdays can see what is needed and record their hours. Hillah asked whether people would prefer that this be done electronically or via paper; the "vote" was about half for each. Bill Bonner also encouraged people to use the garden list serve to connect volunteers and tasks.

Lynn Rothberg presented the membership report on behalf of Steve Gordon, who could not be present. He takes care of the renewal forms and the wait list, and Lynn assigns plots as they become available, to gardeners on the wait list. Mary Gautier also helps with membership and maintaining the records. If several plots are available, e.g., in the spring, Lynn tries to match up the type of plot with the new gardener's interests/energy level. There are currently 102 on the waitlist; over 80 of those signed up for the wait list in the past year. Turnover is faster than it used to be, so waitlist time is shorter. In 2018, 51 plots were assigned. She sent out emails to 85 people offering them a plot; some of them failed to respond or waived the chance to get a plot. Bill noted that plot sizes vary a lot, and said he would like to have larger plots subdivided when they come up for reassignment.

Russ Cramer said there were 17 gardeners whose address was unknown and suggested that they might not be DC residents. It was explained that those were McClean Garden residents whose apartment numbers were missing. The spring renewal mailing weeds out people who have moved to the suburbs; that is why we use mail for that. Russ also asked that people on the waitlist be notified of the meetings; it was pointed out that the meetings are posted on the garden website and that they are on a regular schedule -- the second Saturday of April and October. They are welcome to attend (but do not vote). Russ also said that some members did not have email. Lynn explains that, in that case, she telephones.

Russ also argued that to shorten times on the wait list, older gardeners should have to give up their plots after 5 years to free them up for people on the wait list, citing other gardens in the city that apparently do that. Various gardeners pointed out that one size doesn't fit all, that we have the largest garden in the city and proportionally we don't have the waitlist issues of gardens with a small number of plots. Someone then suggested that we reserve this discussion for "other business" on the agenda and move on to nominations and elections.

Elections

Maureen explained that the positions to be filled were president and three board members. Cathy explained that there are 6 board members with staggered 2 year terms. Three positions are filled each year. Lynn Rothberg was nominated for the first board opening, the nomination was seconded, and she was approved by acclamation. For the second position, a member said that Beth Kaplan was willing to serve if no one else came forward (Beth was not present). Therese Fergo, who was present, also offered to run and explained her background in the garden. Therese was nominated, it was seconded, and she was approved by acclamation. Jane Brookstein, a current board member, expressed a willingness to serve again if no one else present wanted to run. Jane was nominated, it was seconded, and she was reelected by acclamation.

As for president, Maureen expressed a willingness to run for a second term and no one else stepped up. She was nominated, it was seconded, and she was approved by acclamation. Hillah expressed our appreciation for all that Maureen has done to make the garden a welcoming place, and Maureen in turn thanked all the gardeners for their part in helping the garden truly be a "community."

Committee chairs

These are named by the board from the membership. Bill Bonner explained the functions of the Rules Committee, whose former chair is no longer available, and stated his willingness to take on that responsibility; Russ Cramer said he supported that.

Steve Gordon sent word that he was willing to do one more term as Membership Chair, but he really wanted someone to volunteer to be trained to take over. Someone suggested a subcommittee to help mentor new gardeners as needed. Later in the meeting, Charlene and Brianna offered to help with organizing that.

Hillah likewise said she was willing to serve as treasurer for another year but wanted someone to be trained to be a successor for when she completes her MBA. No one at the meeting volunteered for either, so Bill Bonner said he would send out an email soliciting volunteers.

Paul and Hillah agreed to take over the chair of Social Committee, with Cathy helping.

Construction update

Angela Bradbury, ANC member (and gardener), explained that the police garage construction was complete. She and the construction team are looking into the causes of the flooding that has occurred post-construction near the garage and extending to the shed. The homeless shelter construction hasn't started yet; there are some issues about design of an outdoor area to be resolved. Bill Bonner noted that one side benefit if the construction is that the city installed an electric outlet down for us near the veggie compost.

Other business

Susan Akman reminded gardeners to bag any trash (which should include invasive weeds). Otherwise the trash cans are too heavy for the trash collectors. We worked hard to get the current trash system and don't want to upset it. She also explained that we have relocated our chip pile (chips are donated by Care of Trees as available, no set schedule) to near the driveway to the playground/dog park due to access problems at the old site. Please take chips from the street side to make room for the next load.

Russ Cramer said he wanted to raise again two issues, the size of garden plots and gardeners with multiple plots, on behalf of potential gardeners on the wait list, although he also raised a number of other points in passing. He complained that there was no procedure to put in proposed rules to be voted on to address his issues. The board pointed out that the by-laws do provide such a mechanism. Bill also pointed out that DPR is considering city-wide rules for community gardens and that if DPR adopts some that are inconsistent with our rules, we will amend our rules accordingly.

As for the issue of oversized plots, Russ said that gardeners would take over neighbors' plots when they became available rather than have them go to the wait list. When asked for specific examples of when this had occurred, he had no answer. In terms of gardeners with multiple plots, the board explained that this was an artifact of a time in the 1980's when there was no waitlist and we needed to ensure that vacant plots were tended to. As those gardeners leave, their plots are delinked and each one assigned one to a separate gardener from the waitlist. Consequently, the number of multiple plot holders has shrunk to about 10, and will continue to go down. If DPR rules require us to accelerate this, we will do so. Russ left at this point.

The board and several gardeners stressed for the record that we have carefully followed procedures in adopting and amending our rules over the years and have applied them consistently. Susan Akman also pointed out that Russ complains but does not volunteer or perform his 10 hours. A new gardener who got a plot last year said he found the wait list procedure to be transparent and fair.

The meeting adjourned shortly after noon and the members left for the workday and picnic.

Respectfully submitted,

Cathy Winer

Scribe