

Minutes

Newark Street Community Garden

April 23, 2022, Spring membership meeting

Maureen Spagnolo, President, called the meeting to order at the Cleveland Park library shortly after 11, a quorum being present. After welcoming everyone, she had the new gardeners present introduce themselves, and she thanked Bea, Deborah, and Janet for bringing the wonderful snacks and coffee.

Maureen started with a brief overview of the history of the garden, starting in 1975 when it was a rubble strewn lot previously occupied by “temporary” government buildings. It took effort to recruit gardeners, a far cry from now when we have over 230 plots and a two year wait list. Over time, the garden was expanded to include the lower garden, the compost system, and the children’s garden (2004).

The first order of business was approval of the minutes from the fall meeting; a motion was made, it was seconded, and the minutes were approved by voice vote. Maureen next introduced the board members, present or not.

Committee Reports

Membership Lynn Rothberg began by commenting that last year (2021) was unusual. Due to Covid, splitting of oversized plots, and implementation of the one plot per household rule, she made 67 new assignments, well about the usual number in the 40’s. This year to date, two gardeners have shifted to new plots (which they can do by request to the Membership Committee), 14 plots have been assigned to new gardeners, and nine more plots are awaiting assignment. As people are approached from the wait list, about half are no longer interested or eligible; 27 names are gone from the wait list, which now has about 200 names. She will consider reopening the waitlist. The people getting plots now were on the wait list for two years.

Lynn also explained the S.O.M.E. plot, #138. It was a plot which was in terrible condition, which Chris and Juan and Albertino have fixed up and the latter two are tending. All the harvest will be picked up by S.O.M.E. for their food program. When we know their pickup schedule, we will get word out so gardeners can add any excess produce they have to donate.

Treasurer Jane Brookstein explained that Alice Luxardo was taking over as treasurer. We now use QuickBooks for our accounting. Alice gave the following update on finances, as of April 22, 2022. Bank balance on Jan. 1, 2022, was \$47, 342.38. Fees collected since then are \$11,280. Expenses (mainly \$47, 735 for contractors) to date are \$49,144.05. This leaves a balance of \$9,478.53. We may get up to an additional \$1,600 in fees.

One gardener asked whether if, when we don’t have big expenses like the water system replacement, we could consider lowering the fees. Alice explained that that was under discussion but we needed to maintain a reserve for expenses like the shed repairs.

Rules Marilyn, the new Rules Chair, was unable to attend, but Maureen explained that Marilyn will begin doing walk arounds after May 1st to check on rules compliance. She would like to recruit a team of about 8 volunteers so two people can accompany her on each walk around so that at least two people agree on each citation to ensure greater consistency. Bill, who had been rules chair for the previous 4 years, explained the three stages of communications that go from initial citation to plot reassignment (where necessary); it takes time and effort as not everybody heeds emails. In response to a question, he said that weeds were the most common issue, followed by fencing/netting.

Volunteer chair Chris Malloy took over from Arisa. He has been repairing hoses, arranging leaf mulching, organizing workdays, and keeping track of volunteer work hours. Workdays are the second Saturday of the month (good turnout so far) but people doing work at other times can record their hours in the shed. The person with the most hours at the end of the season will get a prize. If any gardener needs assistance, Chris can help find a volunteer.

Compost (weed) Tom Lore explained that in 2020, he started a new 6-bin system. It takes about 6 weeks to fill up a section, which is then watered and covered and left to decompose (takes about 8-9 months to break down). The final volume is about half. Gardeners should add their weeds to the top and back, not the front. When taking compost, do not dig down into the ground; that will not be good stuff and leaving a hole means rainwater collects. Don't add sticks or fibrous stems; they don't break down. Also, no plastic pots and the like – take those home.

There was discussion about lesser celandine (the invasive plant with yellow flowers in the spring). People should bag and remove the plants from their plots, not put them in the compost.

Veggie compost Paul Basola is looking for a backup to help run this, especially during the summer. During the pandemic, with more people at home, the system was at capacity, now okay. McLean gardens now has its own compost system, which Paul spearheaded.

Garden services Kate Gehle is taking this over from Jon Mormino. She is working on systemizing the hoses as well as, with Chris's help (who repaired several of them) and she ordered two new ones. A top priority is shed repair; we have a member who is a contractor and who has offered his crew to do the labor for free. NSCGA will reimburse him for the materials. Another issue is water-logged plots. Kate is canvassing the plots with this problem to assess the cause of the problem and possible solutions. This was discussed further later on in the meeting. She gave a shout out to Susan Akman who arranges for chip delivery and bulk pick up. Susan explained the chips were free; the tree companies drop them off when they are working in the neighborhood, as long as they can get access to either drop off place. Bulk pick-up is done by the city, hopefully twice a season (next one after May workday) but the system for scheduling does not work well. If you can possibly take your trash home, please do so. Wood which can be reused should be left near the shed.

Education Charlyce was not able to attend until the end of the meeting, but Maureen explained that Charlyce had lots of ideas for increasing gardeners' knowledge, which we will be hearing about.

Communications Elizabeth Terry is the chair of the new Communications committee. She is working with Jon to upload more info to the website, and will be working on enhancing our means of communication, including Instagram, signs in the garden (in coordination with Kate), etc. Bill pointed out that the io groups, which we use for the listserv, has some neat features like a place for photos. He encouraged

people to take advantage of what it offers. He also mentioned that the bulletin boards at the shed are where we put official notices of meetings, etc.

Trees Ryan helps maintain the trees in the garden. Call him if you have questions. Gardeners should not plant trees in the common spaces in the garden; such plantings need to be coordinated with him. Carol Ruppel mentioned the blight that affects the cherry tree near Newark Street. Ryan said that it is a fungus that comes from an adjacent tree; how bad it is varies from year to year. The cherry tree is too tall to treat effectively.

Children's garden Jennifer Precht and Hilary Anderson have taken this over from Susan Akman. Jennifer explained how the program combined her passion for gardening with her passion for teaching children. There are about 20 kids in the program now, more are welcome. They need to work on the fence and the raised beds.

Requests for volunteers

Secretary Cathy Winer asked for a volunteer to back her up for meetings which she is unable to attend (especially the fall meeting). It entails taking notes at membership and board meetings, writing up a draft, circulating it to officers for review, and then finalizing the minutes and giving them to Elizabeth.

Social committee We need someone to arrange for snacks for meetings and workdays and perhaps a couple of garden social events. At the end of the meeting, Bea Gordon offered to take over this position.

Election committee Bill Bonner explained that we wanted an independent committee of 2-3 people to solicit volunteers to run for open board member and president slots. We want to increase member involvement in running the garden, and not be dependent on a member present at a meeting volunteering to run. The committee would also run the election (at least if there are more than one candidate for a slot). We may eventually move to online voting by the whole membership, not just those present at the meeting, but not yet.

Discussion of areas that survey showed were of highest interest.

There was extended discussion of water-logged plots, including whether to buy soil in bulk. Kate explained that the first step was to determine why certain plots were wet, e.g., particularly sloped ones (e.g., 167) or ones with poor design or ones with underground water possibly. In some cases, a French drain might be an option (depending on cost). There are some clusters of plots with similar problems.

Raised beds can help. People suggested first putting in old chips, then fill dirt, then a layer 4-6" thick of topsoil. You will need to keep adding soil each year. Lynn said it took years and lots of money for her to get her raised beds in great condition.

Maureen asked for views on whether to buy soil in bulk. If we were to purchase soil, there are issues of how to distribute it to ensure that it goes where needed most. Carol Ruppel pointed out that in her 35 years in the garden, gardeners were responsible for doing whatever was needed to make their plots productive, and that we shouldn't jump to change that. Providing advice and helping with labor for those who need help is one thing; having the garden leadership responsible for fixing plots is another thing. We could end up with an expensive bureaucratic system which may not work. She suggested that gardeners be responsible for their own plots. Several people chimed in to agree with this. Someone

pointed out that incurably wet plots could be turned into rain gardens. Bill added that the education committee could help new gardeners know what to do about flooding.

Because of lack of time, discussion of fencing was deferred.

Charlyce arrived at the end and reminded people there was a sign-up sheet at the entrance for people interested in helping her. She endorsed the idea of her committee educating gardeners on coping with water problems.

Maureen adjourned the meeting at 1:00.

Respectfully submitted,

Cathy Winer

Secretary