

Westbury Community Garden
General Meeting - Board Minutes
January 17, 2023
6:30 – 7:47 P.M.
(Westbury Civic Club)

In attendance, Wayne Slaikeu, Ray Sher, Gary Edmondson, Debbie Gordon, Dorthy Smith, Steve Goldberg, Kat Elder, Marcia Hartman, Franco Posa and by zoom Hazel Potvin, Steve Ewing and Oscar Wehmanen

- I. Call to order by the President, Debbie Gordon.
- II. Debbie Gordon welcomed Franco Posa, Ray Sher and Gary Edmonson to the board and thanked them for their service. Wayne Slaikeu was thanked for his 2 years of service.
- III. **Motion** to approve the November minutes was made by Kat Elder and seconded by Frank Posa. Motion was approved.
- IV. **Motion** to remove Becky Stemper (per her request) from the board, Water Committee, under the auspices of the Specialty Gardens was made by Kat Elder and seconded by Debbie Gordon. Motion was approved.
- V. **Motion** – Ray Sher made a motion to establish a Clear-The-Bed-Team, with the leader of the team appointed at the President of the Board's discretion by the President of the Board or the Chair of the Membership Committee. This team will be responsible for maintaining beds that are not assigned to a member. This team will be an adjunct to the Membership Committee.
- VI. **Treasurer's Report** – Water expenses went down and dumpster expenses went up. A discussion was made on moving our cash into a bank CD, (Fidelity CDs are currently 4%) or Treasury Bills.

Dirt - Hazel Potvin - Farm Dirt 2 bags for \$15.00. Delivery date is February 18.

Repair to kiosk - Wayne Slaikeu -To replace the broken plexiglass on the kiosk by the pavilion will be between \$70 - \$100. Debbie Gordon has a friend who might give us a better deal and will contact them, Christian Glass.

Move meeting date - Hazel Potvin requested we move the meeting date to earlier in the month. Discussion was tabled till February.

East side of property - Debbie Gordon – Hazel and Allen treated the trees and removed stumps and ligustrums along the fence. Debbie Gordon will check with PACA (Police Alliance and Clergy Alliance) regarding removing the motor home

from our lot which belongs to HPD. She will also call Larry's wife to see what she would like to do with the antique tractor rake that belonged to Larry. Rachel Folkert, PIFF's Farm Program Director and Mike Blaha (E12), Don Finley (D6) helped Hazel and Allen Potvin with cleanup of the back property along the east fence line.

Membership – Ray Sher – Garden membership can be paid by PayPal, credit card, or check (mailed to Marcia Hartman at the Westbury Civic Club). Starting in January you will receive a comprehensive report of volunteer hours for each month.

Weeds – Franco Posa – Weed letters were sent to gardeners.

Classes – Gary Edmondson – Education committee will start offering tomato, soil, vegetable, and herb classes.

Wildlife Habitat – Kat Elder – No Christmas trees. We will use wood.

Fundraising – Debbie Gordon – Do you have **friends** or friends who know someone who might be interested in making a donating to the garden.

Tomato tasting is a fundraiser we do that cost us approximately \$250 and we make around \$400. It traditionally has been held the first Saturday after Memorial Day.

Founder's Breakfast – This year we plan to have a Founder's breakfast. We expect, hopefully, 30 people. La Madeleine will cater the event. A \$100.00 donation is suggested to attend this event.

Franco Posa suggested we contact the **American Heart Association** for a possible donation.

Miscellaneous – Franco Posa is open to contacting Valero regarding fixing the holes in the east fence. Debbie Gordon will talk to the apartment manager regarding their fence. There is a field trip on Wednesday morning regarding irrigation and cisterns.

A. Reports

Bee Committee – Steve Ewing– January 17, 2023

- Due to the chilly weather, we have not inspected the hives since the last December. Opening the hives when the weather is below 60 degrees is hard on the bees, for it releases the warm, humid air that they need, as well as the scent of the essential oils that is in the wax. All of the hives had a good size population and adequate resources (nectar, capped

honey, pollen) to last through the winter except for Jane Doe. She is the newest hive and is a Top Bar Hive. The population is lower than normal and her resources are minimal. Becky and Steve will need to provide Jane with sugar syrup every two weeks in order for the colony to have a chance to make it through the winter. Otherwise, either the cold will kill them, since they do not have enough resources to provide energy, or they could starve.

- All of the colonies survived the cold weather over Christmas, which is a relief
- Amy Hunter has removed her hives which we provided space while she was remodeling her yard with fencing, patio and other stuff. Becky, Steve and Mike Blaha will do some rearranging of the hive layout in the spring. We are not planning on getting any larger than the five hives currently in place.
- There are several different folks, outside of WCG, that want to come and watch us work the bees. One lady wants to set up her own hives after she works with us for a while. So, we are continuing our focus of education.
- We are hoping to be able to harvest honey this year, but that will depend on the weather and the nectar flow in the spring.

Apiary Garden Report – Kat Elder – January 17, 2023 – No activity during the month of December 2022.

**B. Community Outreach and Fundraising Report – Debbie Gordon
January 17, 2023**

Community Outreach

First Annual Founder’s Breakfast March 25

Breakfast event on the WCG grounds

Presentations about WCG development, past, present, future

Pay by seat or table of 8; Pricing - \$100/seat

Local businesses and civic leaders invited

Tomato Tasting June 3

Fishbowl drawings for donated prizes

Fundraising

USDA NRCS

Final reimbursement has been received. \$1107.15

Annual SeedMoney Campaign: Nov 15 – Dec 15

Donations = \$3141;

Matching grants

Strong Start = \$100

Challenge grant = \$400

Arnold Brownberry Oroweat match = \$1000

Total \$4641

Check arrived this week

Jacob & Terese Hershey Foundation

Letter of Inquiry (LOI) submitted; decision on who can apply for a grant on Feb 20.

Small Grant Opportunity

Constellation Energy

Matt Simon received another invitation to apply for a \$500 grant (May).

HEB community support - \$300 in gift cards for

Volunteer events. \$20/monthly volunteer day and \$50-60 for Volunteer appreciation day.

Large grant possibilities

Clif Family Foundation

Rejected

Will apply again to Clif Family for operational support

Will reapply for AARP Community Challenge (opens in January)

CenterPoint Energy Foundation

Cullen Foundation

Meeting with Dawn Blitz, professional fundraiser with Willow Waterhole Greenspace Conservancy

Who do you know?

We all have a responsibility to be salespersons for WCG. We should not be shy about telling friends and acquaintances how dedicated and passionate we are about our community garden. We should brag on how far we've come in 12 years and talk about where we want to go. I would like to give as many tours as possible this year in hopes that someone who knows

someone who may sit on a philanthropy board will see all the potential in our 7-acre piece of land.

Do you know someone who might have friends in high places? Outreach/Fundraising can help you write an email, not asking for money or a donation, but asking if they have an acquaintance who might be on the board of a philanthropic board and might have 10 minutes for a quick inspiring story about WCG. We all need to help spread the word about our garden and all we do. You just never know when a friend of a friend of a friend might give WCG a personal introduction into the Houston philanthropy world.

C. Compost Committee – Hazel Potvin – January 17, 2023

Composting

Due to persistence from Rich, Betina, Hazel and George and with help from volunteers, particularly a high schooler named Ashton, the piles have been turned fairly frequently and the thermometers show good heat. The last turn was to combine two bins into one.

We will not have enough compost for all gardeners so we intend to do a drawing of the garden numbers including the special gardens and issue a 5-gallon bucket to as many gardens as possible. We will do this as soon as Betina returns on Jan. 23.

We also want to sell bagged Farm Dirt to the gardeners in February so that all gardens can be well enriched for the spring planting season.

D. Membership Report – Ray Sher, Betsy Longoria, and Steve Goldberg – January 17, 2023.

1. Emails sent to ten members who owe fees for community service hours not completed. Six of the ten have paid via PayPal. Reminder emails will be sent on 1/15/2023 to the four who haven't paid.
2. Emails sent to all members to declare if they intend to renew. As of 1/13/2023, 33 have declared to renew their membership. 20 have not responded.
3. The C4-C5 group has decided not to renew due to lack of enough gardeners.
4. Emails sent to all members to pay their membership renewal fee. As of 1/13/2023, 10 members have renewed.
5. On Saturdays, January 21 and 28, renewals will be accepted at the community garden from 9 to 11, cash and check on both days and credit card on the 28th.

6. There are currently six vacant beds. The E9 is being reserved for elevation. The others (C4, C5, D11, D12, D13) are available for new members.
7. At the January business meeting, Membership will propose the establishment of a Clear-The-Bed-Team, with the purpose of preparing and maintaining vacant beds for new members. A process will be in place where Membership informs the CTBT when a bed is in need of clearing and when it has been assigned to a new member

E. Pocket Prairie Report – Hazel Potvin – January 17, 2023.

The Westbury Pocket Prairie was mowed on Wed., Dec. 7 at the cost of \$550. The east field was also included in the mowing. The tractor operator brought a helper who trimmed at the prairie and at the east field.

Tree Trimming

My husband Allen Potvin helped cut down Chinese tallows that were growing along the north fence. Not all of the stumps have been treated but will be. We also cleaned up tree waste near and behind the motorhome. George, Mike, and Don helped to truck away the tree waste to a site in Westbury. The City of Houston has picked up all that tree waste.

There is a tallow tree out near the east fence near to where Larry parked his tractor. Allen girdled that tree with his chain saw. This will kill the tree but leave it standing as a food source for birds. Woodpeckers also like to find dead wood to make their homes in.

I hope to do more work around the trees along the east fence and the north fence to make more habitats for birds. Those trees were planted two years ago this January. I hope to see good growth from them this year.

The east field was seeded with wildflowers on Dec. 28. Rain came the next day. Expect to see a lot of blooms out there this spring.

F. Specialty Gardens – Kat Elder – January 17, 2023

No December Workday so only trash pickup, ant treatment & some weeding/pruning. We have Natives which will sustain some damage but should reappear Spring 2023.

On Monday Martin Luther King Day, 1/16/23 short Workday, outside volunteers helped me with Bermuda/weed grass removal, some deadwood pruning & started some Spring seed planting (late for wildflowers, but better in the ground...)

12/22-24/2022 unexpected early hard freeze: The garden owes Ray Sher & Gary Edmondson, N 40 Orchard managers. Many thanks for

organizing a group of garden volunteers to protecting our new & tender Spring Citrus & other fruit trees. They gathered numerous bags of neighborhood leaves/pine needles, piled them up around the trees with their home cages & wrapped them 100% with a heavy freeze cloth. Although most leaves are impacted, they were inspected again 1/16 and we believe they saved our trees- Spring will tell. Please relay your thanks to them.

We anticipate more freezes this winter; leaves/needles are being retained around the trees after pulling away from the bases. So do NOT remove these or allow anyone else to do so.

Note: if the Board approves construction of 2 Wildlife Brush Piles (second request for a small one East of the Pollinator bed is forthcoming), my Committee with any Volunteers will construct the beds at 1/28/23 Workday, using the retained tree pruning's. Two wonderful first-time volunteers today said they would return then.

If not approved, I'll be working on the Apiary Poll bed, B1 & BF beds.

Notes: we were surprised by a huge PIF workday this morning. Volunteers gathered at the PIF greenhouse; didn't use the Pavilion where our Volunteers did gather. Many of the PIF volunteers were parked in the garden & the field, not along Dunlap as we've requested. Executive Board, please request their notice to volunteers again with Rachel (working today!), Liz & Paul???? Franco loaded the fence boards dumped by someone at the dumpster last week; Rachel transported the PIF waste truckload in her pickup to the dump!

A sad, young, beautiful steel gray Pit Bull mix female dog, (in a heat cycle) was abandoned with a collar/leash at the garden this morning. She's been posted on Nextdoor, a foster was requested, she's been left with water & food near the bench at the Chinese tallow tree. She was sleeping there at 6 a.m. when I brought her more food/water to keep her safely on the property, hoping her owner will feel guilty & retrieve her. Dog house bedding was dried out if she chooses shelter. Shelters and rescue shelters are overcapacity.

Don't bring your dogs until she's gone.... expect unneutered Male K9s hanging around.

G. Site Maintenance – Wayne Slaikeu – January 17, 2023

Major concern is someone has struck the east side of the kiosk and the plexiglass has to be replaced. I am trying to find a cheaper solution for its replacement. The prices from Home Depot and Builder's Square range around \$70 to \$100 dollars. However, regardless of cost, it will soon be replaced.

Another concern is a report from a member that someone was observed stealing produce from many beds.

We need to remind gardeners to be alert and report and take pictures, if possible, of any suspicious activity in the garden, since thieves and vandals have been a persistent problem. A good reason to again think about obtaining a surveillance camera for the garden.

H. Treasurer's Report – Marcia Hartman – January 17, 2023

Westbury Area Improvement Corporation

Profit and Loss	Garden Operations 0.00
January 1 - February 14, 2022	Activities -0.01
Cash Basis Monday, February 14, 2022 05:35 PM	Apiary 442.46
GMT-06:00 1/1	Garbage/Trash/Dumpster 272.91
TOTAL	Paypal Fees 61.22
Income	Portapotty 51.55
Garden Income 0.00	Seeds -392.00
Donations to WCG 2.00	Site Maintenance 164.98
Garden rental 3,309.60	Soil, Mulch, Fertilizer 227.11
Volunteer Hours Paid 135.00	Water -3,572.57
Total Garden Income 3,446.60	Total Garden Operations -2,744.35
Total Income \$3,446.60	Total Expenses \$ -2,717.70
GROSS PROFIT \$3,446.60	
Expenses	NET OPERATING INCOME \$6,164.30
Contract Services 0.00	NET INCOME \$6,164.30
Accounting Fees 26.65	
Total Contract Services 26.65	

I. Volunteer Report – Betina Wolfowicz – January 17, 2023

Jan 16 is coming up soon. I will not be here. Is there work to do? Can you come and lead a group? I won't be here.

The same for Jan 28, 2023. I will be here and I can coach composting duty

Please let me know ASAP so we can advertise in Volunteer Houston, High Schools, etc.

VII.

Meeting Adjourned at 7:47 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by Dorthy Smith/ WCG Secretary