

**Westbury Community Garden
General Meeting Board Minutes
September 19, 2023
6:36 – 8:01 PM via Zoom**

In attendance, Debbie Gordon, Franco Posa, Wayne Slaikeu, Dorothy Smith, Steve Goldberg, Kat Elder, Marcia Hartman, Isaac Spencer, Ray Sher, Gary Edmondson, Betina Wolfowicz, Hazel Potvin and Margaret Mitchell

- I. Meeting called to order by the President, Debbie Gordon.
- II. A motion was made to approve the August, minutes by Kat Elder and seconded by Betina Wolfowicz. The motion was approved.
- III. A motion was made to approve the August, Treasurer's Report. Postponed until the next meeting (not everyone received the minutes).

Old Business:

- IV. Bob Randall's book. We received 20 orders.
- V. Chinese Tallow Trees - Barbara Hite of the District K office had the tallow trees taken down and removed.
- VI. Mulch project is complete except for around the E9 bed. This bed will be fixed when the weather is cooler.
- VII. The WCG open house will be September 30, 2023 from 9:30 to 1:00. The American Community Garden Association tour of the WCG garden and PIFF will start at 11:00 after the tour everyone will have lunch and board the buses at 1:00 p.m. **Betina Wolfowicz** with the compost team will talk about composting, **Ray Sher** will give new membership orientations, answer questions about membership and the ins and outs of gardening. **Steve Ewing's** (away for a UH rugby game) friend and mentor **Amy Hunter** will remove a frame from the bee hive and place it in the observation frame so people can see the bees working, up close and personal. **Tracy Hamblin** will give a fermentation demonstration using a simple salt solution to make sauerkraut, pickles, root vegetables or whatever you wish to ferment. **Margaret Mitchell** and **Kat Elder** will talk about native plants. Debbie Gordon asked the Durans to talk about their cactus but did not get a response. **Debbie Gordon** will make herbal tea and a cactus salad. **Betsy Longoria** will talk about fall seeds and planting the fall garden. We will have a total of 8 tables (Margaret Mitchell will bring 2 of her own tables.) and everything including the tents will be setup at 8:30 a.m.

- VIII. Fall Seed Packets will be sold 9/23/2023. These are last years seed packets, please throw away the coated parsnips seeds. They will not germinate this year.
- IX. Field – The east field will be mowed (by tractor) on 9/23/23 the cost is \$550. They will clean up the NE corner and Marcia Hartman will see if she can fit the 2 tires that were dumped on the prairie, into her car and dispose of them.
- X. **New Business** – New nominations – We need a new Vice President and Treasurer who will also be the treasurer for WAIC 2024. Anyone interested in the position for treasurer will need to contact Becky Edmondson.

Vandalism – Vandalism is still taking place at the garden. Margaret Mitchell will check into solar powered security cameras. Debbie Gordon will call the constables again since it's been reported that they are not coming by to ask people to leave the garden at dark.

Dirt by E9 - Wayne Slaikeu reminded us that we need to cover the dirt by E9 to eliminate as many weeds as possible.

Pest Control – Margaret Mitchell will be our new Pest Control person.

Seeds and Seedlings – We need someone to pick up the seeds and seedling on October 7. They have a new location now, TC Jester and 34th.

Hazel Potvin warned us about Amazon gift card emails from criminals. Debbie Gordon said to hover over the URL and it will tell who is sending the email.

Margaret Mitchell asked about bringing her compost from home to the garden. As long as it doesn't have any harmful chemicals and it's organic Debbie Gordon and Hazel Potvin said it was ok.

- XI. Fund Raising – I (Debbie Gordon) talked with Steve Seltzer of the Public Works Department, Greenspaces, City of Houston and he thinks we are brilliant because we plan to use **Truegrid** for our driveway. It is the same driveway used by Wabash and Bayou Bend. It's **a eco-friendly paving alternative to concrete and asphalt that provides stability and stormwater detention**. It is super durable and stormwater-permeable to reduce flooding as well as stop rutting and erosion by providing structure for ground stabilization.

Steve Seltzer will send us a letter of support because we are using TRUEGRID, as well as, Urban Harvest, WAIC and District K. We will need these letters when applying for grants.

Lesley Briones is the new grant person for the City of Houston in charge of grants. We might also receive help from John Whitmire if he is elected mayor.

Gardening Within Reach



- Prototype Bi-Level Garden built in 2014.
- Gardening Within Reach name coined with Eagle Scout project 2021.
- Linking nearby driveway and parking to sit/stand gardens for seniors/disabled persons may help make the driveway and parking more urgent/important.

Gardening Within Reach

49% of WCG members are over age 60

There will be increasing demand for accessible sit/stand gardens

5 plots have already been converted to sit/stand

Hope to fund and build 3 more in 2023 (E10, E12, E?)

Plan to complete the last 4 bi-level gardens in 2024

Master Plan Driveway and Parking



- Three parking areas
- Driveway divided into 4 segments

We would like PIFF to help fund the driveway between us and PIFF. We will have slanted parking spaces and 1 if not 2 handicapped spots.

Costs



- Bi-level beds \$875 each
- \$2625 for 3 beds (2023)
- \$3500 for 4 beds (2024)
- \$22,000 concrete work
Curb cut, driveway approach and ADA compliant sidewalk
- \$89,000 270' section 1 driveway

Driveway defines spaces for later use.

Westbury Community Garden



The Westbury Community Garden educates adults and children about good nutrition and ecology, strengthens community spirit, provides organically-grown food and serves as a gathering place for the community.

- Allotment Garden
- Southwest Houston
- Largest / Successful
 - 62 100 sq ft plots
 - Compost production
 - Native Pollinator Habitats
 - Culinary & health-related herbs
 - Orchards
 - Rain catchment
 - 2 acres – Plant-It-Forward Farms
 - Restored pocket prairie
 - Beekeeping

Grants



- Dept of Neighborhoods Matching Grant; max \$5000 match. Concrete work.
- Astros Foundation; \$10,000 for concrete work
- HEB; \$2400 for 3 elevated gardens in 2023.
- River Oaks Garden Club; \$3500 for 4 elevated gardens in 2024.
- Whole Foods Market; \$2000 for 3 elevated gardens in 2023.
- Clif Family Foundation; Feb, June, Oct; \$22,000 for concrete work
- JPMorgan Chase – Network For Good; applied for website redesign.

XII. Reports

A. Bee Committee Report – Steve Ewing – September 19, 2023

Have not made any inspections in the last 4 weeks, primarily due to the heat and the lack of rain. The lack of rain means that colonies that are low on nectar, pollen and honey will be out looking for it. If we open up our hives and do not move quickly, other colonies may become aware of their resources and start a robbing frenzy – bad news

We will be doing hive inspections in October to see how the colonies are doing as far as resources for the winter

We moved one of the nucs to another beekeeper that can put the bees into a full-size hive.

I will find out what inspections and permits need to be obtained in order for us to sell honey and bees next year. I had planned to do this at the recent Bee Clinic in Bryan but I was not available due to a rugby match – I help coach the Univ of Houston rugby team

B. Apiary Pollinator Bed – Kat Elder – September 19, 2023

Cancelled August Workday: Last weekend's rain was helpful to this and all of our beds and the Orchard trees.

C. Community Outreach & Fundraising Report – Debbie Gordon – September 19, 2023

Community Outreach

- Beverly Barabin's healthy lifestyles group, Sunshine and Wellness, came to WCG on Sept 2 for a Fall Gardening and Composting class. She made a \$50 donation and purchased 2 seed packs (2 x \$10). WCG donated 1 more seed pack to the group.
- American Community Garden Association conference will tour WCG/PIFF at around 11:00-11:30 to 1:00 on Sept 30
- WCG Open House, Sept 30, 9:30 – 1:00
 - Garden tours and prospective member orientations – Ray
 - Herbal teas – Debbie
 - Nopalitos Salad – Debbie/David Duran?
 - Fermentation demo – Tracey Hamblin

- Native plants – Kat/Margaret (have 2 posters; may include plants for sale or give-away)
- Bees – Amy?
- Fall Vegetable Gardening/Seed Sales – Betsy
- Composting – Betina/Hazel

Fundraising

Grant applications

We have Letters of Support from Urban Harvest and COH Public Works / Green Building Resource Center. Letters requested from VMPT Castex-Tatum District K, Xavier Herrera BOMD, Cindy Chapman WCC

- Dept of Neighborhoods Matching Grant; max \$5000 match. Concrete work.
- Astros Foundation; \$10,000 for concrete work
- HEB; \$2400 for 3 elevated gardens in 2023.
- River Oaks Garden Club; \$3500 for 4 elevated gardens in 2024.
- JPMorgan Chase – Network For Good; applied for website redesign.

In Progress

- Garden Club of Houston; \$114,500; \$89,000; \$22,000; \$3,500. Prioritized funding for all, TrueGrid driveway/parking, concrete work, or 4 raised beds.
- O’Quinn Foundation grant; \$22,000 for concrete work
- Clif Family Foundation; Feb, June, Oct; \$22,000 for concrete work
- Brown Foundation; pre-app completed; \$22,000 for concrete work
- CenterPoint Energy; next cycle February 1 – March 10.

More grant apps

- AARP, Community Garden grants; Applications open January, deadline March 15
- Starbucks/Neighborhood Grants; \$1K-\$10K; ?2024 dates
- Lloyd’s Register; investigating

D. Education Committee Report – Gary Edmondson – September 19, 2023

The Class Committee met last on August 12 where we set up fall gardening classes.

The first class was on September 16th at 3 pm on Zoom. The teachers were Ray Sher, Gary and Hazel Potvin. Eleven people attended.

The second class will be on September 23 at 9 am. It will be taught by Hazel Potvin and Debbie Lancaster. There will be seeds available for purchase.

Gardening Book by Bob Randall had a price change due to a cost increase in producing the book. As of 9/19/23 at 1:40 pm we have sold 10 books at the new price. I have the capacity to sell 3 more books without causing problems for Bob. I placed a deadline of 5 pm tomorrow.

**E. Membership Committee Report – Ray Sher – September 19, 2023
No Report**

F. Pocket Prairie – Hazel Potvin – September 19, 2023

Due to heat and dryness, I have stayed away from the prairie. I relied on the mowing service to delitter. However, there is a lot of litter in the grass that you see when you actually visit. Noreen and I have made several attempts to work on it. We have finally gotten the pallet out and the two tires thanks to the help from Mike Blaha. Though the prairie may look neglected and dry, it is doing its usual thing. The plants bloom, are pollinated, and produce seed. We have a huge number of Liatris stems that will produce a lot of seed. I thought the drought had pushed the milkweed into dormancy but was surprised to find lots of Zizotes milkweed in flower. A late summer flowering plant I really like is Agalinis which is also called prairie Gerardia is in bloom on its shrubby stems. Another treat was to see white rain lilies in bloom. The rains of last week and weekend pushed these native rain lilies into flower. I eagerly await the tall blooms of the swamp sunflowers and the goldenrod. The seaside goldenrods are particularly tall and close to being ready to bloom. Bees and butterflies will be well supplied. Lastly, the air was full of the great mosquito catcher insect known as the dragonfly. Dragonflies love to have plants to perch on. Something our prairie really lacks are good stands of native grasses. I did spot an Indian grass bloom. Another grass would be little bluestem which I did not track down yet. The native grasses we do have are at the corner of Dunlap and Green Craig. There is switch grass and eastern gama grass occupying that area. Drought is hard on plants and hard on us who like to grow things, but native plants usually tolerate drought and return in succeeding years. Sometimes you also get some surprises that a drought can trigger in the seed bank in the soil. We will be watching to see what comes along in 2024.

G. Specialty Garden Report – Kat Elder – September 19, 2023

Since the August monthly workday was suddenly canceled, not much was done in the Specialty Gardens.

H. Site Maintenance Report – Wayne Slaikeu – September 19, 2023

The tarp covering soil next to "E" beds for raised beds is in terrible shape and looks bad. Someone (probably from PIFF), ran over the corner of the tarp and exposed a lot of the soil and leaving pieces of tarp in various places looking bad for the coming tour.

Speaking of looking bad, look at North border of PIFF. Looks like part of a junkyard and the trash is on our property. Rachel needs to be informed to clean up for tour. Sure she wants PIFF to look good for tour.

One of the empty beds covered with clear plastic is looking bad because the plastic is breaking down into fragments. Need to remove pieces.

WCG is becoming a magnet for junk. 2 tires were put in front of dumpster. At least they were not put in dumpster. Need to take to city dumpster.

To those using sheds. When closing door, make sure no cat is in shed. As I closed door on shed one, I heard a meow and almost locked a black cat in the shed.

Several aisles are completely blocked with vines or plants and are tripping hazards. Gardeners responsible for their aisles need to be informed.

We need to have more than a couple of hours to get ready for the open house and tour which is very close.

I. Treasurer's Report – Marcia Hartman – September 19, 2023 – No Report

J. Volunteer Coordinator Report – Betina Wolfowicz – September 19, 2023 – No report

XIII. Meeting Adjourned at 8:01 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted by Dorothy Smith – WCG Secretary