

**Westbury Community Garden
General Meeting - Board Minutes
March 19, 2024
6:30 - 7:45 p.m. via Zoom**

In attendance: Ana Lorena Jaramillio, Betsy Longoria, Christina Prasad, Cora Lindsay, Debbie Gordon, Dorthy Smith, Gary Edmondson, George Prasad, Hazel Potvin, Kat Elder, Marcia Hartman, Ray Sher, Steve Goldberg, Virginia Livingston and Wayne Slaikeu

- I. Meeting called to order by the President, Debbie Gordon.
- II. A motion was made to approve the February minutes by Ray Sher and seconded by Marcia Hartman. Motion was approved.
- III. A motion was made to approve the February Treasurer's Report by Kat Elder and seconded by Ray Sher. Motion was approved.

Old Business

Driveway and Parking update – The City of Houston permits. We need quite a few engineering documents to submit to the City of Houston in order to get the curb cut and driveway permitted. The engineer set seemed to be a huge obstacle at first because the first engineer wanted \$23,400 but Steve Stelzer from The Green Building Resource Center recommended a smaller female owned firm. Griselda Gonzales, primary engineer and owner came out to the garden and was very interested in doing the work. She offered to do most of the work pro bono. This is a very nice offer but I want to pay her something. She is meeting with the city to see what is needed in a limited scope permit for a 200 ft driveway. This will not be permitting the whole Master Plan. This should make it simpler and go faster. I have heard that the permitting process could take one and half to two months plus it will take her a month to work on the drawings. Time was tight so I contacted the Department of Neighborhoods Friday and asked for an extension. They granted us a 30-day extension. The engineer thinks this will give us enough time to get everything done especially since it's not the whole Master Plan. The Harris County Precinct 1 meeting was about the first section of the driveway and a bit about the whole Master Plan. At some point before June 1 the concrete work for the driveway cut will be done. Peter Key director of Infrastructure and Developments would like to meet with us regarding Precinct 1 possibly doing everything.

Compassionate Houston – Their annual focus will be on Community Gardens. They are having a luncheon at the Junior League on Friday, tickets are \$150.00 each. Becky Edmundson and Debbie Gordon will attend. Bob Randall, Jana Robinson with Urban Harvest and Ernie Manouse with the NPR program will be doing a video on Community Gardens. The video will be shown at the luncheon.

Podium – Virginia Livingston made a prototype cover for the podium. The final cover is going to be clear vinyl so people won't take it off to see what's under it. Andy Wilhoit or Martha Huebel painted the step stool for the podium and it is now on the bottom shelf of the podium.

Sign – Steve Goldberg had a WCG sign made with our logo. Thank you

Farm Dirt Order – The ordering and delivery went smooth. I want to thank everyone involved. We had 2 bags of farm dirt that were left over. They can be sold for \$6.25 a bag or we can clean them up and put them in the shed and use them as raffle prizes at the Tomato Tasting event.

Trees for Houston – Debbie Gordon asked them about replacing four pine trees that didn't make it through the drought. Trees for Houston said they are completely booked up and said it would have to be a fall date if we want them to help us plant them. They mentioned they had a free tree give away coming up so Debbie went to the event and got **four longleaf pines** in 3-gallon pots. She will keep them watered at her home until planted. We need to plant them soon; if it gets too hot we will have to wait until fall to plant them. Gary Edmondson would like to see the trees planted, as soon as possible rather than later. He indicated they do much better when planted immediately rather than sitting around in pots. We will have to remove the old trees first before we plant the new trees, hopefully we can do this on Saturday. When we have severe weather the Watering Committee will be in charge of watering all the trees.

Patio Tomato Outreach Program – Cora Lindsay – We have two ambassadors at, The Heights at Post Oak apartments across the street, Alison Grogan and Shirley Mann. Shirely has helped me get people invested in learning about how to grow food on their patio. Hopefully this will bring us more connectivity with our neighbors. The Program so far has been pretty successful. It's been almost 3 weeks since they have had their pots and they are pretty excited. They have even emailed me pictures of their tomato plants and some have even named them! Debbie Gordon donated the pots and grow bags, tomatoes were donated by Home Depot, and the fertilizer was donated by Microlife. Cora will give us more feedback in April.

Raised E. Beds – Cora Lindsay and several friends with the help of Gary Edmondson and Ray Sher straightened out the wall on E8, and on Saturday E10 will be filled with soil.

New Business

Monthly Weed Inspections - The monthly weed inspections will resume this month with Wayne Slaikeu doing the inspections.

Future Outdoor Learning Projects – Betina Wolfowicz, Cora Lindsay and Debbie Gordon had a conversation about differentiating between different volunteer groups who want to come and work and school groups who want to come and learn. It's quite different. Some tasks are better suited for kids. We thought we would create a flyer that offers outdoor learning with modules for kids. We will probably have to formalize the modules and list what each one entails. We are thinking about asking for a donation possibly \$7 per child or they can contribute less. I think this is appropriate and reasonable.

Cora Lindsay stated that permaculture architecture and landscaping is in one of her grant proposals. Debbie Gordon said that Urban Harvest has a program that offer this to those graduating from high school. Jordan, a volunteer, who works at Urban Harvest suggested we look into Urban Harvest for funding for our program. They might have a grant, that will give us money.

Diversity Forms - I sent around the diversity forms to our 72 gardeners. There was spotty information on income and age which was expected. Only 17% of our gardeners are under the age of 50.

DEIAB (Diversity Equity Inclusion Accessibility Belonging) Report - March 2024

Total Membership = 72

Age

Under age 50 = 17%

Over age 50 = 83%

Over age 60 = 71%

Gender

Female = 58%

Male = 42%

Ethnicity

Non-Hispanic White or Caucasian = 62%

Black or African American = 17%

Hispanic or Latino = 7%

Asian / Pacific Islander = 14%

1 = Prefer not to answer

LGBTQIA = 8%

6 = No answer

Veterans = 7%

Seed Swap – Debbie Gordon asked if the leftover seeds were taken somewhere. Ray Sher removed them from the shed and took them home.

Hubbard Squash – Debbie Gordon would like to plant Hubbard squash as a trap crop to trap squash borer, evidently the borer like this more than regular squash.

Hugelkultur Method – We are going to put oak filler in the bottom of the E9 and E10 beds. Wood debris decomposes slowly, making it a stable source of organic matter. This Saturday we will finish up filling the beds.

World Bee Day – Steve Ewing thinks we will have a lot of honey this year hopefully in time for May 20, Word Bee Day. We may have an outreach event where we sell honey cake, baklava and other items made from honey.

Tomato Tasting – Will be June 1. We plan to trim back the number of tomatoes we have for tasting. We might also sell tomatoes for the first time and have raffle prizes.

Lighting – New management at The Heights at Post Oak apartments replaced the lights to be brighter. Steve Goldberg is working on a presentation to give to them. We changed the fixtures at Valero and will ask the Heights to look at those. Steve Goldberg and Debbie Moran belong to **Dark Sky International**. It looks into how bright lights affect us.

Reports

Bee Committee Report – Steve Ewing – March 19, 2024.

By early March, I hope that we have warm weather and the group can inspect the hives. The main concern now is if they had enough resources (honey, nectar, pollen) to survive the winter. In the south, the cold weather is not a big issue for the bees, but starvation is.

- I am in the process of making 3 more “nucs”, small hives to put either splits from the existing hives or removal bees into the apiary
- I will be putting in a request to expand the apiary 6’. The area we have now gets very crowded when more than two people are working with the hives
- I will be cleaning up the swarm box by the dumpster, re-baiting it and re-hanging it, in the hopes of getting our 4th swarm in that box.

Apiary Pollinator Bed – Kat Elder – March 19, 2024

The weather, out of town travel, car problems and other commitments have thwarted Steve Ewing, Mike Blaha & I from getting transplants in around the Apiary. Will try this coming week.

The Apiary Pollinator Bed needs much more work- severe overgrowth of Frogfruit (Anyone want some?) and weeds; replacement plantings needed (Texas Star Hibiscus, Black Eyed Susan, Wild Flower seeds) and brambles/Johnson grass, Ragweed and young Hackberry trees kept in bay east of the bed. Our sole Wildlife Habitat Pile nearby is doing its job!

Community Fundraising Report – Debbie Gordon – March 19, 2024 – No Report

Community Outreach Report – Cora Lindsay – March 19, 2024

I have edited the Tomato Tasting flyer to 20+ tomatoes.

Food For Families DEIAB outreach initiative - Ten neighbors at The Heights Post Oak apartments have been provided a grow bag for their patios with donated tomato plants from Home Depot.

MicroLife donations insured the plants got off to a powerful start. They are growing and half the participants are responsive.

Hopes are that the outreach program assists engender more apartment support and participation in making our community grow together while bringing the art of growing food to populations with compressed time and resource access.

2 p.m. 3/30 - tomato plant tea time and catch up is booked for us to gather as a group under the pavilion. Please come by and say hello if you plan to be in the garden that Saturday!

We have created some flyers for the upcoming tomato tasting event in June. In a separate email I can provide assets for people to post on their social media, feeds or flyers to print out. Should you want to share with people in your community.

10:30 a.m. -12:30 p.m. - June 1 is the date of the Tomato Tasting.

Other Outreach Committee work underway:

1. Comms calendar for the year
2. Events planning for the year
3. Social media and other Marketing Channel planning such as PR pitches
4. Internal learning and discovery between various committees about goals that Outreach can assist with this year and into planning next year goals.

I've made a point to volunteer as much as possible as a way to steep myself in everything operations and programming at the Garden.

Please feel free to let me know if there are elements that the outreach committee could help with regarding marketing or communications of any kind.

Education Committee Report – Gary Edmondson – March 19, 2024 – No Report

Membership Committee Report – Ray Sher – March 19, 2024 – No Report

Orchard Committee Report – Isaac Spencer – March 19, 2024 – No Report

Pocket Prairie – Hazel Potvin – March 19, 2024 – No Report

Specialty Garden Report – Kat Elder – March 19, 2024 – No Report

Site Maintenance Report – Wayne Slaikeu – March 19, 2024

Top of the list. Increased bright lighting at the apartments and also other places such as the Valero station, and church on Hillcroft. After checking these lights which are detrimental to night pollinators, Steve Goldberg and Debbie Moran examined this issue and will propose solutions to this problem to these businesses. Ms. Moran is certain that the apartments are violating city light ordinances that they need to remedy. Steve and Debbie will offer solutions to this problem.

There has been some concern about security at the garden. Remember, I was assaulted at the garden. We need to address the issue of the increased traffic through the garden going to Valero and businesses on Hillcroft. Putting the new entrance next to the bus stop will increase that traffic. There has been concern about strangers visiting the garden and strangers going through

the garden going to Valero. Gardeners should not have to worry about their safety while gardening. Also, all-night lights at the apartments make their trek through the garden easier and encourage vandalism at night. Management needs to address these issues.

On a brighter note, the speaker platform/podium has been covered for longer life, and Steve has started coating the new benches and tables with a preservative that will extend their life.

Still seeing need for cleanup of beds. Gardeners still need to remove fall and winter non-producing plants, diseased plants, and weeds. Remember, Brassicas, diseased plants, insect-infested plants, and weeds need to go in the dumpster and not in compost bins. The president and vice president will be checking the beds and sending out warnings and 10-day notices soon.

Treasurer's Report – Marcia Hartman – March 19, 2024 – No Report

Volunteer Coordinator Report – Betina Wolfowicz – March 19, 2024

I am trying to come up with ideas on how to accept volunteers from outside organizations when it has become a bit hard to recruit members from the garden to guide the activities. One possibility is to include a request for group leaders in the newsletter. For sure Debbie has been doing this all along but I am talking about a sign-

up sheet to have a fixed group of volunteer leaders who can be contacted every session and be frequently present, besides the usual collaborators. Just like being part of the apiary, watering or compost committee. Other than this, we have Solugen coming on the 23 of this month and Rainard school on the 29 of this month. We already signed up a group from Corgan for April 27 and there has been an informal inquiry not formalized yet.

IV. Meeting adjourned at 7:45 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted by Dorthy Smith – WCG Secretary