

Westbury Community Garden
General Meeting - Board Minutes
June 18, 2024
6:32 – 7:51 p.m. via Zoom

In attendance, Debbie Gordon, Wayne Slaikeu, Dorthy Smith, Steve Goldberg, Marcia Hartman, Kat Elder, Ray Sher, Gary Edmondson, Cora Linsay, Wanda Jenkins, and Margaret Mitchell

- I. Meeting called to order by the President, Debbie Gordon.
- II. A motion was made to approve the June minutes by Kat Elder and seconded by Marcia Hartman. Motion was approved.
- III. A motion was made to approve the June Treasurer's Report by Kat Elder and seconded by Debbie Gordon.
- IV. Ray Sher and Wayne Slaikeu proposed a motion to require gardeners who get a 10 day notice, to attend a **Best Practice** class on weeding and maintaining your garden bed before you can renew for the following year. Marcia Hartman seconded the motion. Motion was passed.
- V. A motion was proposed by Kat Elder to put all new gardeners on probation for 3 months to see if they maintain their beds. This was not approved since Marcia Hartman indicated weed letters are sent to gardeners who do not maintain their beds. But we should make sure they open the weed letter. Ray Sher and Betsy Longoria will watch over new gardeners.
- VI. **A motion was made to update the handbook and turn it into a PDF by Debbie Gordon. Include in the handbook that gardeners who do not clean up their beds pay \$60.00 and make a notation in LGL (Little Green Lighthouse) that they were not a member in good standing. A decision was not made on this motion.**
- VII. A motion was made by Debbie Gordon that we continue zoom meetings for now and in September start using the Platou Center

for our meetings this was seconded by Marcia Hartman. The vote was 3 - No and 4- Yes. The motion was passed.

Old Business

Tomato Tasting Event - We raised a record \$672.00 from the Tomato Tasting event, previously we raised \$300.00 and spent \$200.00. This year Shelly Johnson revised the score card and Debbie Gordon printed them saving us a lot of money. We had a lot of Raffle Prizes this year which accounted for most of our profit.

One of the questions that came up was to move the Tomato Tasting event to an earlier date in the year because it was hard, this year, to keep the tomatoes fresh. Ray Sher suggested we move it up 1 week which would be Memorial Day (It could be done since it's a 3 day weekend.) and Kat Elder suggested 2 weeks earlier, then thought maybe we should hold off on this decision to see what the weather is like then decide. Debbie Gordon said we couldn't wait too long because we need to start asking for donations and doing marketing in advance of the Tomato Tasting event. We only had **20 varieties**, this year, **due to the heat and bugs**. We need to figure out a way to acknowledge donors maybe a Thank You or Giving tree. We did acknowledge donors on our website. Debbie Gordon will send a notice to the Crier listing the tomatoes that won the competition and listing the donors. We also had a sign on the registration table acknowledging donors.

New Business

WCG Book Club – We will have our first meeting in July. Should we allow only garden members or everybody? The first article will be “Forbidden Fruit, “The anti-avocado militias of Michoacan” by Alexander Sammon, Harper’s Magazine.

Illegal Dumping - Melvin Hopkins, Constituent Services Director, Field Operations with the City of Houston will provide signs and cameras. Anyone making a delivery to PIFF should have an approval letter from PIFF administration. If they don't tell them to turn around and leave. Debbie Gordon will follow up with Melvin Hopkins.

PIFF will notify us when they have deliveries. Most of the leaves PIFF receives have other things in them, such as weeds and nutgrass, that we don't want. Debbie Gordon said PIFF wanted to fence their property to

prevent dumping. Concern is we need to be able to access the property for deliveries as do they.

Weeds – Monitoring of the beds is being done by Dorthy Smith and Margaret Mitchell. Wayne Slaikeu, the Vice President is responsible for sending out 10 day letters. A video needs to be created on removing grasses, weeds and mulching (no colored mulch). We need to know at the beginning of a board meeting who received letters, who improved and who is out. We do have a letter that says, “You didn’t do this by the appointed date and we are sorry to see you go.” Gardeners need to communicate. Is your bed a mess because you were in an accident or because you are sick?

Amaranth (November 2023) and sunflowers have been banned in garden beds.

Trees for Houston – Trees will be planted in October.

Bayou City Community Market on Hillcroft in Westbury Baptist Church parking lot – Should we sell plants and seeds at their Market. They have one June 21, Saturday from 9-1 pm. The last market will be in October. We currently have an account with Smith Nursery, 1119 County Rd 192, Liverpool, TX 7757. We should ask Shelly and Roy Johnson to do some seed packets to sell. We could sell small plants that we buy for \$1.25 and mark them up to \$2.25.

VIII. Reports

A. Bee Committee Report – Steve Ewing – June 18, 2024

A lot has been going on in the apiary, so here we go:

- Last week the bees were picked up for the Pasadena Community Garden. This is the first time we have sold a nuc (nucleus) that we have held for a period of time. This was our first time, so we priced them low at \$250. We are going to be supported by a website in Austin (BeeMindful Apiary – no cost) and will be offering our bees for \$350
- Prasad George (D-11) bought two of our recent removals for \$100 each
- For 8 hours we were down to only one nuc, the small hives, then within 24 hours we were up to 3, as a friend of mine and I did a water meter removal and a cable box removal

- We inspected the large hives today and found one of the Top Bar Hives, the horizontal ones, had absconded. We are still scratching our heads on that, for it was our first colony from three years ago and until last fall, was our most productive.
- With one of the two Top Bar Hives empty, and the hives are an old design, I plan on replacing both of the hive boxes with standard size Top Bar Hives. This will be at my cost
- It is time for honey harvesting! We plan on taking two bars of honey comb from the yellow Top Bar Hive and all of the excess honey from one of the Langs. That will be done within the next two weeks. These will be bottled in half-pint jars and given to the Garden for sales at upcoming events
- One of the Langstroth colonies has become very aggressive when we are inspecting it, to the point that we have decided to replace the queen. It will be “interesting” trying to find the queen with an aggressive colony buzzing around.
- We caught a swarm in the box on the tree behind the dumpster. I transferred it to another TBH nuc, cleaned up the box, re-baited it and replaced it on the tree.
- I plan on putting a notice in the WCG Newsletter to find out if other gardeners are interested in being part of the Bee Committee. It is now only Mike Blaha and me, and my beekeeper friend, Cathy Findley

Apiary Pollinator Bed – Kat Elder – June 18, 2024

It's still growing well, producing nectar for bees and pollinators. I herbicided the more invasive Hackberry trees last month. Sadly, I don't have the volunteers to work there and won't be leading at the 6-22 workday. The East field common Sunflowers, native wildflowers, trees, and native milkweed are providing resources for numerous pollinators! ... Along with the Pocket Prairie on our South side.

Note: Poison Ivy is again growing along the north fence line and likely the east also. Unknown who will take responsibility to spray it since Hazel is unable to do so.

B. Community Fundraising Report – Debbie Gordon – June 18, 2024

Fundraising

Submitted

- AARP Community Challenge Flagship grant (\$50,000) Awards to be announced mid-May.

In Progress

- BOMD Community Development Grant - \$7500 max
- Will reapply for Dept of Neighborhoods Matching Grant (\$5000) on July 1

Harris County Precinct 1

- Touched base by email; They asked for a copy of our presentation. Reminded that they already have it. They said, “We have not forgotten you. Something will happen soon.”

Engineering Documents for Driveway Permit Set

- The Permitting Set is expected to be ready for submission in June.

Driveway Funding

- \$5,009 spent on raised beds so far.
- \$50,638 raised for driveway so far (none spent) (includes BOMD grant still in progress)
- May need to cover a \$7100 shortfall temporarily if permitting is approved before more funds are raised.

Timeline for Raised Bed Conversions on E Row

- E12 is complete except for soil in the deep end.
- Break for summer
- Next up: E3, E4; then E2, E5 and E6 when these gardeners have a spot to move to.

C. Compost Report – Hazel Potvin and Compost Team – June 18, 2024 – No Report

D. Education Report – Gary Edmondson – June 18, 2024

Following our last board meeting I wrote an article on summer gardening. It went in the newsletter last month.

I am traveling this month, but I will schedule an education committee meeting when I return in early July to plan out:

1. Fall Vegetable Gardening in early September
2. Herbs: I will sort out the details of a class with Julie Fordes
3. Planting the seeds for a Texas Native Garden: I will talk to Hazel and Noreen about this class/ article. Schedule for late September?

E. Membership Committee Report – Ray Sher – June 18, 2024

- No new requests for membership
- Expect that to pick up once we have a touch of cool weather in the fall
- Thinking about checking in with newish members to keep them going in the hot weather.

F. Chair Outreach Committee – Cora Lindsay – June 18, 2024

OUTREACH (MKTG) CHANNEL UPDATES

Website: no updates

Social Media: We continue to formulate content that is meaningful to gardeners in an effort expand the awareness that WCG houses experts who reach out to lift everyone up through gardening.

Sponsor Partner Marketing Kat secured event sponsor for the Tomato Tasting and they were marketed via a sign at the registration table. We continue to find ways to secure partners and market them as it is mutually beneficial for each party.

Grassroots Event Marketing: The events have drawn new crowds with most people being referred by other member gardeners or having seen it on Nextdoor (posts by Debbie, thank you Debbie!) or the Westbury Crier. Those remain our best ROI channels for Grassroots events.

Email marketing: Debbie kicked off the IN THE GARDEN News! We should consider developing this to the point where it becomes a resource

guide with expert advice as well as an events announcement email going out each quarter. This is a great way to support Crier advertisements and other direct marketing outreach efforts.

Public Relations Marketing: Debbie and I have started an email list “group” in LGL with contacts who are journalists, reporters, editors etc. so we may swiftly send a large group of people with interest in promoting community events the announcements each quarter of what is happening at the garden. We used it for the most recent events and will continue to help it grow. We are also connecting with civic leaders through earned media opportunities.

Internal Marketing: The Outreach and Fundraising community met June 15th and reviewed the rest of the year as well as what worked and what didn't over the last few months from fundraising and outreach efforts. Everyone is invited to the fundraising and outreach communication planning platform! Email Cora for a link to join. You can leave any time and it's easy to use.

I move to have the board meetings IRL (In **Real Life**/in person) to enrich leadership connectivity.

REVIEW AND PLAN FOR THE FUTURE

Bee Day, Tomato Tasting, Bridge to Gardening / Community Outreach and more

The Girl Scouts outreach and education fundraising events went very well and we hope to have more groups like that come out for evening events to educate and engage the public while using the opportunity to fundraise.

The Bridge to Gardening (formerly known as Food for Families) tactics of engaging our HAPO residents and beyond has shifted from patio gardening gifting and education to outreach event activity invites to attend our 4th Saturday event. We are directly contacting each member of the HAPO Bridge to Gardening community inviting them to our community service, education and outreach events that happen monthly so they feel a stronger sense of belonging and will garner more exposure to gardening without us having to bring ourselves to the apartment complex. We are bringing HAPO residents, along with the entire community, to us in a more focused way as opposed to meeting them where they were in their homes as that approach was not working for various reasons. The shift in the name and the

approach has only been live for May and June but so far it is working and we will continue to nurture this pilot program into the *Some Like It Hot* programming. We do the fourth Saturday each month.

Bee Day was a hit and we plan to double down on school participation next year, making this outreach event an annual occurrence. May 10th Annual Bee Education event will be the target date for next year.

Tomato Tasting was hot and the fruit was languishing on the vine so the BOD has requested that programming bump up the 2025 event date to May 17th for next year's Tomato Tasting. Debbie Gordon has extensive notes on things to do better. One note I have is that there could be more than one check in station to ease the line. Even with a steady flow of people and two of us welcoming attendees it is a lot to explain to people that they need to donate for a plate and score card and get raffle tickets. People wanted to see raffle items before committing. I suggest we set up a raffle sales ticket table at the raffle tent set up and then the score cards / plates are separate so we ease traffic and disperse people throughout the event. We were asking people to sign up for the new public-facing newsletter Debbie has launched as of May "IN THE GARDEN News" and there is already a contact list of 500+ people. We took subscription requests from people that walked in via the QR code registration form. I would like to continue to have this flyer at outreach events and maybe on our bulletin board unless there is a bad-actor risk factor we need to concern ourselves with, as we don't want to open ourselves up to being hacked / spammed.

The May Community Service and Outreach Day went well, where we had nature bracelets and tours of the garden available while others were in the garden planting trees and performing community service projects. Some people were being educated and engaged on the premises and some were working. Then there was some cross-over. This is a good example of a best-practice goal for moving forward into the rest of the year with our combined efforts to merge: Community Service Volunteer Work Days, Bridge to Gardening belonging initiatives, Community Outreach at large as well as educational goals.

2024 reimagine Monthly Community Service, Education and Outreach Day JULY 27TH, AUGUST 24TH, SEPTEMBER 28, OCTOBER 26TH, NOVEMBER 23RD, DECEMBER 28TH – pending education programming

for those dates and if / how we all collaborate on themes for unifying these three functional areas.

E.g. May theme: Volunteer at the apiary beds to weed and plant. Listen to a guest lecturer on what to plant and what not to plant to support native pollinators as well as a bee craft for local residents to heal through art while learning the science behind pollinators at the garden.

Some Like It Hot Summer! June, July, August and September will largely be focused around the aforementioned melded outreach/education/volunteer programming for 4th Saturday activations. That way we can all garden, weed, rest and focus on our other goals such as Betina's book club she's kicking off soon during the hot summer months.

Celebrate heat loving veggies in our 4th Saturday activations! Think about this when working across committees for education and art / science programming. (okra, sweet potatoes, eggplant, chiles, basil) (tentative). Incorporate *Art 4 Health* with Dr. Maesha.

Seek sponsors for the quarterly *Some Like It Hot* series July, August, September. To give us food and drinks for the monthly community service / outreach/ education celebrations.

Kroger, HEB, Whole Foods, Fadis, Starbucks, Dandelion Cafe, Bagel Shop, Panera.

We will add you to printed flyers if you want the logo, flyers.

End of the Year OND (Ordinary National Diploma) October will hopefully bring a plant sale to replace the Willow Waterhole Jazz Festival. October event to replace the music festival is a plant sale pop up at Bayou City Community Market at Westbury Baptist Church (which is currently held every other Saturday if you want to go check it out.)

To-Do List:

– Shelly Johnson will organize gardeners who will build the seed bags as well as who will grow flats of seedlings that are willing to start in August. Goal is XXXXX flats of XXXXX seedlings.

– Cora Lindsay will organize a marketing calendar and assets to get to gardeners, the BOD and our mailing lists including press contacts no later than August 1st. (church newsletters)

G. Pocket Prairie – Hazel Potvin – June 18, 2024

Quite a few people accepted my invitation to tour the pocket prairie in May and June and used their iNaturalist AP on the apple phones. There were lots of flowers to see big and small and there are still good reasons to explore the prairie especially because the liatris is in bloom. It can be seen well from the street.

I do not know what else to highlight since I haven't ventured in to look. We plan to have a small portion of the prairie mowed especially near the church fence and then will try to seed it. With switchgrass which is a native grass that develops deep roots which help to absorb more rain water. It is also known for its ability to sequester carbon.

When that mowing happens, the maze garden area will also be mowed and the back field and around the trees and along the fence with Valero and some mowing as much as possible near PIF. The big mowing will be in December.

H. Specialty Garden Report – Kat Elder – June 18, 2024

Butterfly Beds:

The beds & B1 Pollinator Collection were well prepared for the June 1 tomato tasting in May by the SG committee. Looked beautiful, though unknown if they were noticed by visitors...

The front grounds (arranged by Wayne) were thankfully mowed by Margaret Mitchell and her friend the eve of 5/31. Many thanks to Margaret Mitchell and Wayne Slaikeu! The BOMD crew did not come as requested by Hazel: showed up LATE Saturday morning during the Tomato Tasting event!

The rains this spring and early summer have helped everything grow: our desired plants and weeds of course. Check out the gorgeous Day Lillies in bloom in the South bed!

The horrid Persimmon roots continue to spread into the BF Beds, B1, the C2 Herb Collection and back into the Main Orchard, along with horrid Hackberry trees. Isaac Spencer and the Orchard committee will need to treat these (preferred when I do so in my areas).

The Tent Caterpillars which attacked our 2 Beloved N40 Mulberry Trees: they've dissipated and the trees are intact! Thank you, Wayne Slaikeu, and Margaret Mitchell, birds and wasps!! Caterpillars are still in the tall Main orchard Persimmon (kept for shade, which should again have lower branches removed...)

I need to remove excess Giant Coneflowers and select native and prairie plants. I would like to propose to have the Board consider Specialty Garden and volunteers digging and potting these and some of our excess native plants and a volunteer purple VITEX tree to sell at an upcoming Fall garden fundraiser. I would need money for potting soil; should be able to gather up free pots. These plants would be offered for sale along with WCG honey and perhaps some vegetable seedlings.

If plants ONLY are unsold at the garden we can lease an inexpensive booth at the nearby Bayou City Market with which Debbie Gordon and I are in contact.

I. Site Maintenance Report – Wayne Slaikeu – June 18, 2024

Since the garden has so many issues with weed removal, removal of outlawed plants, invasive plants, removal of plants, out of season and not producing, diseased plants, plants spreading seeds and bad insects, I think the education committee should address these issues, communicating how to properly deal with these issues.

First, is how to clear an aisle of weeds and slow down the reappearance of them, in an organic manner. That means not to use non-organic chemicals, no dyed mulch, etc. Procedure and what to use is important.

Since a lot of gardeners have no clue why we ban certain plants, we need to make clear what plants are bad for the garden and why. Also, since banned plants seem to spread easily, gardeners need to be aware of bad plants that emerge in their bed and remove them immediately.

The Education Committee in the past has focused on how to grow vegetables but remained silent on more important issues such as how to keep weeds out of their bed and aisles, and what not to plant, and why. Control of bad insects is another main issue not addressed.

The Orientation Class cannot cover these issues thoroughly, so maybe a separate class on our garden rules should be required, before getting a

bed, or even required for renewing a bed. The 10 day weed letters are the best we have but are not effective since they have not been enforced.

My report is that weeds are getting out of control and better measures are needed, in addition to 10 day weed letters. Even those that want to abide by our garden rules, do not know how and have no motive to do so. Also, bad insects and plant diseases are everywhere and spreading.

Another issue is too many plants, especially vines blocking aisles due to not being fastened by supports or tended weekly by pruning.

J. Treasurer's report – Marcia Hartman – June 18, 2024 – No Report

K. Volunteer Coordinator Report – Betina Wolfowicz – June 18, 2024

There is a group of 40 to 50 Rice sophomores who want to volunteer at the garden Wednesday July 10, from 8:30 to 11:30. Cancelled due to the aftermath of Hurricane Beryl which hit Houston July 8, 2024.

IV. Meeting Adjourned at 7:51 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted by Dorothy Smith – WCG Secretary