

Westbury Community Garden
General Meeting - Board Minutes
January 21, 2025
6:30 – 7:50 PM via Zoom

In attendance, Debbie Gordon, Shelly Johnson, Marcia Hartman, Wayne Slaikeu, Dorthy Smith, Kat Elder, Hazel Potvin, Ray Sher, Julie Fordes, Bill Hancock, Maisha Tianuru and Betina Wolfowicz

- I. Meeting called to order by Debbie Gordon.
- II. Dorthy Smith - November Minutes (No December Meeting) are approved as distributed and read by the board.
- III. Marcia Hartman - November (No December Meeting) Treasurer's report is approved as distributed and read by the board.

Old Business

Committee Chair changes – Gary Edmondson is stepping down as Chairman of Education but will remain on the committee. **Julie Fordes** will replace him as the **new Chairman of Education**.

Betsy Longoria is stepping down from membership and **Shannon Vitek** will be a **new member on the Membership Committee** with Ray Sher as Chairman.

Driveway – Changes to the driveway parking and detention plan. Debbie Gordon sent the plan out that she sent to Griselda Gonzalez and as you can see, she took out the walkways that we said we did not want and the east west detention zone has been modified. The western part is about half the width of the eastern part. The PIFF farm area will extend further south reducing the Prairie to 1 acre. The farmers will have 2 acres. The gravel access driveway south of PIFF has been changed from 2 lane to 1 lane approximately 12 feet wide. We will keep the walkway along the fence; waiting for Harris County to sign off on it but wondering why we would want to start it in the corner.

Persimmon tree (small in diameter) – The Torres Tree Service removed it for \$300.00.

New Business

T-Shirts – If we order 20-24 shirts of one design it will be about \$18.00 per shirt. Kat Elder will choose the colors. The vote was 5 to 5 for Logo in the middle and over the heart; order 2 versions, same color.

Audit – The audit was \$3,400 and was prepared by Canady & Canady.

Swales - The Region 9 National Fish and Wildlife Grant will cover the swales. Greenstar Wetland Plant Farm has made suggestions for the swales. Houston Wilderness Inc., is one of the planting organizations will supply volunteers. We will start planting in September going through December having 2 plant sessions per month. The plants will cost us between \$30,000.00 to \$40,000.00.

New Members – Courtney Carter joined the Community Gardeners (D3, D4 & D5) on 1/18/25. And James (Jimmy) Cox, also a new member, has been assigned B5.

Google Email Group – Should we delete it since it is not password protected and open to the public. Hazel Potvin sometimes uses it for mailouts. The decision was made to delete everyone's emails from the email group and keep it.

Farm Dirt – Soil amendments can be ordered by credit card or you can contact Hazel Potvin for check or cash transactions. Last year we ordered \$1,000.00 worth of dirt and \$60.00 for delivery. Hazel Potvin will contact them for more information regarding delivery fee.

Mike Blaha – He wrecked his truck and is working on getting another one.

Security at the Garden. The WAIC meeting was cancelled and Debbie Gordon had planned to request that the constable drive (patrol) through the garden on a regular basis. We have a suspected drug dealer dealing on the premises, asking for sexual favors and buying beer for minors. We also have a man and woman sitting on

the benches, every day in the back, smoking weed. We suspect they are homeless. They also have dogs that follow them around. Debbie Gordon gave them a verbal warning about smoking weed on the property.

2 Benches that convert to tables – These were donated to the garden by the Herb Society. They will provide more seating and workspace for gardeners. Julie Fordes requested that they be placed near the D2 bed.

Bench/chairs – Kim Brown's parents died and she is donating \$500, in their name Rog & Jody Rogers, to buy a bench or green chairs for the garden.

Handicapped Bed – The concrete (13x3 pad for bed) will cost \$7,000 for the handicapped bed and curb cut. Hazel Potvin will do research on the type of bed and will also talk to Rice University since they have some too. We need to pay attention to the water lines, valve and pomegranate trees when pouring the concrete.

Stray Dogs – BARC will come and remove them if they have enough complaints; so please call and complain.

IV. Reports

A. Bee Report – Steve Ewing – January 21, 2025

It has been a year of Ups and Downs.

Wind storms at the first of the year knocked several of the hives off of their stands. No long-term damage but it will take weeks to determine what damage was done to the bees.

We had several sales during the year.

- Sold one nuc for \$250 to a beekeeper in Wharton
- Sold two nucs to a Westbury Community Gardener for \$100 each
- Sold a nuc to the Pasadena Community Garden for \$250

Harvested 2-1/2 gallons of honey that was bottled and given to the Board for use/sale

My beekeeper friend and I made several presentations, including an observation hive, to various groups during the year.

- Bee Day at the Garden
- Westbury United Methodist Church Day School
- St. Luke's Methodist Church Day School.

We caught a swarm in the swarm box behind the dumpster.

Sadly, through the year we lost Devora, Stephanie and Annie, all Langstroth hives, and Tsarina, a Top Bar Hive. All absconded. I am going to have to do a lot of studying to learn how to prevent this in the future.

The drought that we had in late summer killed off most of the flowering plants or at least the flower production of pollen and nectar, which was a major problem for the bees. That may have resulted in the loss of some of our colonies.

Plans for 2025 include:

- Replace all of our lost colonies with bees that we remove from various locations.
- Put the swarm box back up on the tree behind the dumpster and one at my back yard.
- Replace both of the Top Bar Hives, the boxes themselves, with more standard sized hives. This will allow us to share resources with the nucs and each of the full size TBH's.
- Expand the apiary by 10' due to the cramped space. I have the quote for the two replacement sections needed and will put in a request to the Board in January.
- Continue to make Bee presentations. We already have two requests on hand – one with a return visit to St. Paul's Methodist Church and another at Bouquet's Garden Club, where Hazel is a member.
- Continue to attend Bee clinics and some of the local bee club meetings to continue to educate myself. The next one is in Brenham on March 1.

B. Community Outreach and Fundraising Report – Debbie Gordon – January 21, 2025

Fundraising

Awarded

- Dept of Neighborhoods Super Neighborhood Grant Program (\$7000)
 - New driveway curb cut, driveway approach and sidewalk
 - Wheelchair accessible bed base
- H-E-B Community Support Grant for Founders Breakfast/15th Anniversary (\$300)
- Eden Brothers Seed Gift Card (\$125)
- Johnny's Selected Seeds Gift Bag
- Submitted
 - JP Morgan Chase – Force for Good Tech Assistance Grant (Steve)
 - Amy's Kitchen - \$1000 for wheelchair beds + soil
- In Progress
 - The Brown Foundation
 - Ben and Jerry's Foundation, no deadline, rotating
 - Five Star and Urban Waters Restoration Grant / National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (federal); Deadline 1/30/2025
- Financial Audit – required for this Federal grant. In progress.
 - Native Plant Society of Texas Houston Chapter 1/31/2025 \$2,000; For bioswale plant material.
 - NPSOT Bring Back the Monarchs to Texas 2/10/2025
 - Entergy Charitable Foundation 2/1/2025
 - Harris County Precinct 1
- Ongoing
- Final driveway and drainage/detention site plan in progress
- Gardening Within Reach – E Row Elevated Beds

- E5 is half done. E3 and E4 will be converted in Jan/Feb 2025.
 - Super Neighborhood Grant Program, \$7,000, will fund the concrete for the wheelchair accessible bed in the E2 spot. Researching planting beds that allow for knee space.
- SeedMoney Campaign
 - Goal \$7000. Received \$3586 including matching and bonuses.
- In Memoriam Donation
 - Kim Brown – donating for her parents, long-time Westbury residents, Rog and Jody Rogers
 - \$500 donation for green chairs or park bench.
- Children's Environmental Literacy Network
 - Former WCG member, Dr. Surendra Surujdeo-Maharaj, is now working with the Children's Environmental Literacy Network.
 - They are applying for a very large Federal grant to teach composting in schools. The idea is that children will teach their parents about healthy practices (following the anti-smoking model of the 60's). If awarded, they will include WCG's participation in kitchen waste recycling in some way (schools or Heights at Post Oak apartments.)
- Founders' Breakfast
 - 9:30-11:30AM, March 22
 - \$100 donation/seat
 - Conservationist, Jaime Gonzalez, keynote speaker
 - Gift bags for donors – WCG Coffee Mug, garden journal, WCG pencil, lavender sachet, seeds
 - Breakfast sandwich (Central Market), potatoes, arugula salad, berry yogurt parfait (assembled by WCG committee), coffee, Roselle tea, juice bar
 - Eden Brothers Gift Card Donation: zinnia seeds to distribute to all gardeners in late Jan/early Feb - beautification
 - Special Raffle item: Beautiful, framed native plant artwork
 - Need door prizes

- 15th Anniversary Festival
 - 12:00-3:00 PM, March 22
 - Free, open to the public
 - Educational Booths
- WCG Honeybees
- Urban Harvest – Permaculture
- Herb Society of America – STU
- NPSOT-H
- Green Star Wetlands Plant Farm
- The Joy of Butterfly Gardening in SE Texas
- Bird expert (Houston Audubon cannot attend)
- Soil expert
- Honey Sale, mugs, t-shirts
- Arts & Crafts – Dr. Maisha Tianuru
- Outdoor Games – 2 Corn Hole sets (ToolBank)
- Food truck? Any ideas?

C. Compost Report – Betina Wolfowicz – January 21, 2025

In the compost team we are down to six people. I am now officially coordinating the group. Now that holidays are over and it's time to return to a regular routine, we are starting to mix again. We received a big bin from Kat Elder, which I am sure will be put to good use in case of overflow.

Bags will also be ready for pick up this afternoon 1/18/25.

D. Education Committee – Gary Edmondson – January 21, 2025 – No Report

E. Membership Committee Report – Ray Sher – January 21, 2025

Shannon Vitek is a new member of the Membership committee and is already communicating with prospective members and participating in orientations.

- We are looking for one more member of the committee.

There has been lots of movement in the garden over the last few months:

- Kim Nguyen is moving from E2 to B9. She will continue to harvest fall veggies from E2 for a while.
- Beth Breen moved from the E row to C12
- Shannon Vitek moved from the E row to B2
- Seth Rodecker and Stephen Alaniz moved from B2 to E9
- Scott Strang moved from C12 to E6
- Unoccupied beds
- B10 (This bed was Kayte Ledbetter's. It is covered with plastic. It will be weeded over and over until it is ready for a new gardener, but that will likely be late spring at the earliest)
- C10 (This bed was Grantley Payne's. It is covered in plastic. There are some weeds on the south end that will be weeded and ready for a new member.)
- Once elevated into bilevel beds in early 2025, E3 and E4 will be available for gardeners over 60 years of age who have difficulty gardening from the low beds.
- Prospective New Members
- An orientation was done on Saturday, December 13 for Jimmy Cox. He is a Veterinarian in Sugar Land. His clinic is 15 minutes away from the garden via Hwy 90. He is an experienced gardener and is excited to be part of the community and wants to join the compost committee.

Renewals for the 2025 gardening year

- The committee has been encouraging members to satisfy their volunteer hours prior to the end of the year.
- In the early days of January, the committee will email all gardeners to renew asap for 2025 or let us know asap if they do not plan to renew. Everyone needs to sign the 2025 Gardeners Agreement and Garden Rules and pay via Paypal, check or cash.
- C11 (This is Alyson Grogan's bed. She has health issues and plans to take a break from the garden.)

- B5 (Will be available as of February 1. This is John Donovan's bed. He and his wife have expanded their home garden.)

F. Orchard Committee Report – Isaac Spencer- January 21, 2025 – No Report

G. Pocket Prairie Report – Hazel Potvin – January 21, 2025

December is the time to put the prairie to sleep. If we could, we would burn it. But it is not very dry. The plants are still blooming and are green. So mowing is the best option. On Sunday, Dec. 1, 15 Boy Scouts from troop 197 and a few parents trudged into the prairie to delitter it. It took about 2 hours. The boys loaded all the sacks and debris into a truck and went to the dumpster to unload it. When they were finished, the Scoutmaster called their attention to the fact that the cleared field would be how early explorers and settlers found the land with lots of grasses and flowers. Because of rain and some personal commitments, I postponed mowing. It should take place on Friday, Dec. 13 at 2 p.m. PIF is expecting the mowing. Included will be the field around the apiary. Normally the tractor driver brings a helper with a trimmer who gets around the trees and the fake fence line and the apiary and any other trees. It sure will look different. One of the neighbors asked me why we mowed because she enjoyed the wildflowers. It reminded her of the country of her childhood before development. It is just a way of getting ready for a new growing year.

H. Site Maintenance Report – Wayne Slaikeu – January 21, 2025

When available, volunteers are needed to do a complete cleaning of shed 2. Rats have made the shed an unhealthy place to even enter, with rat feces everywhere and urine odor is so strong masks should be used for safety if in the shed for even a short time. This is a priority. After cleaning, measures must be made to keep the shed rat free with traps and cover any rate entry ways.

I have included board members to make everyone aware of the health problem and board members that have items not needed, need to remove non-essential items. Cleaning means getting rid of

items not needed and even items needed that can be stored elsewhere. After cleaning the shed, board members need to check the items stacked to the North of shed 2 and compost area to get rid of items that will not be used, because the clutter of wood, metal and plastic fencing material attracts rats, as well as, looking bad.

I. Specialty Garden Report – Kat Elder – January 21, 2025

There was no Workday in December, 2024.

With the hard freeze/sleet and snow commencing 1-20-25 to 1-24-25, it's unknown which plants will survive in ground. But expect surviving Native plants to be pruned down by the February or March Workdays, after danger of more freezes. Will see the initial impact at the 1-25-25 Workday. Seeds need to be planted now in the beds.

The Persimmon tree near the front Orchard was removed and the stump ground on 1-17-25 by Torres Tree Service. I am hopeful that the seedlings in the Orchard, Butterfly and Herb beds, from the underground root system, will either die or can be killed with a herbicide.

The Board and Orchard Committee can decide where to plant the best fast growing shade tree, this time away from the fruit trees.

I've seen less bees and butterflies in 2025 feeding on nectar plants & using water bowls in the pollinator beds and growing beds during the summer heat.

Purple Martin House: NE damaged house not yet repaired: needs pipe replacement and a new rope pulley by our team before Scouts return in February. Will be relieved to have Shed 2 cleaned of rats/excrement, preferably soon, before I need to access Purple Martin supplies & tools.

J. Apiary Report – Kat Elder – January 21, 2025 – NO REPORT

This report will no longer appear under the Bee Committee Report but instead under Specialty Gardens.

K. Treasurer's Report – Marcia Hartman – January 21, 2025

Can be seen as distributed to members of the board.

L. Volunteer Coordinator Report – Betina Wolfowicz – January 21, 2025 – No Report

V. Meeting Adjourned at 7:50 p.m.

Submitted by Dorothy Smith – WCG Secretary

