

**Westbury Community Garden
General Meeting - Board Minutes
August 19, 2025
6:33 – 8:00 p.m. via Zoom**

In attendance, Debbie Gordon, Shelly Johnson, Steve Goldberg, Kat Elder, Julie Fordes, Steve Ewing, Betina Wolfowicz, Hazel Potvin, Dorothy Smith (absent), Wayne Slaikeu, Shannon Vitek, Marcia Hartman and Sudie Stennis

- I. Meeting called to order by the President, Debbie Gordon.
- II. A motion was made to approve the July minutes as written and distributed to the board by Dorothy Smith. Approval pending
- III. A motion was made to approve the July Financial Report as written and distributed to the board by Marcia Hartman. Approved
- IV. A motion was made to secure 6 Security Cameras and 6 signs for the garden. Approved.
- V. A motion was made to pursue grant funds for two steel sheds and storage racks, which would require documentation of bids and potentially include additional equipment like a 100-foot hose.

VI. Meeting

Quick recap

The meeting covered various operational and planning matters including AI transcription policies, financial updates, and security improvements for the facility. The group discussed infrastructure projects including new sheds, tool organization, and storage solutions, while also reviewing grant opportunities and funding options for various improvements. Updates were shared about partnerships with medical schools, crime prevention measures at local apartment complexes, and plans for herb garden management and volunteer engagement.

Next steps

- Debbie: Pursue grant funds for 2 steel sheds and storage racks.
- Debbie: Continue pursuing the Harris County Precinct One grant application process starting October 1st.
- Board: Prioritize projects for the Department of Neighborhood matching grant application.
- Debbie: Prepare a poster for the Thursday potluck to gather member input on grant priorities.
- Debbie: Follow up on the status of the Isla Carol Turner Friendship Foundation grant payment.
- Debbie: Prepare new grant applications for garden projects.
- Katherine Yeager: Assist Debbie with grant writing.
- Debbie: Circulate the contractor's bid breakdown for moving the water line and tree work.
- Debbie: Obtain estimates for moving the water line 20 feet east near the compost area.
- Kat: Purchase 6 fake cameras and at least 6 signs for security purposes.
- Site Maintenance: Determine how to mount the security cameras.
- Debbie: Transcribe calendar planning meeting notes into a spreadsheet with dates from August through next July and distribute to everyone.
- Debbie: Prepare for Sally Alcorn and her staff's visit on August 29th to complete the wheelchair bed.
- Julie: Chair the new Herb Committee and recruit more garden members to maintain the herb beds.
- Julie: Recruit more WCG members to join the Herb Committee through emails and other outreach methods.
- Julie: Consider organizing additional herb education sessions or events to attract more volunteers.
- Debbie: Formalize the creation of an Herb Committee with Julie as chair.
- Debbie: Purchase lime green, purple/lilac, and red spray paint for tool color-coding.
- Debbie: Organize volunteers to mark tools according to the new color-coding system.
- Wayne: Mark sheds with corresponding colors to match the tools stored in each.
- Kat: Submit reimbursement request for the Zevo spray.

- Kat: Coordinate with Ross to install the repaired part for the Martin house.
- Kat: Move the hose over to the pollinator bed.
- Kat: Discuss with Steve about installing a lock on hoses in the compost area.
- Julie: Send a reminder email about the Potluck on Thursday night.
- Julie: Set up a poster at the Thursday potluck for members to vote on priority projects.
- Board members: Attend the Thursday potluck to represent the garden.
- Debbie and Marcia: Redesign the donation page on the website to include legacy giving options.
- Steve Ewing: Create two videos: one explaining the difference between Langstroth and top bar hives, and another walking through the apiary.
- Steve Ewing: Organize "day with the bees" events for fundraising.
- Hazel: Coordinate the field mowing on Thursday at 10am.
- Hazel: Help Kat with removing persimmons.
- Steve: Present about the new website navigation at the Thursday potluck.
- Jasmine Clay: Speak about preserving harvest at the Thursday potluck.

Summary

AI Transcription and Security Approvals

The meeting discussed the use of AI transcription for meetings, with Debbie explaining that only names are visible and no personal information is shared. The group approved the July meeting minutes with corrections, including a name change from Planet Forward Farms to PIF. Marcia presented the financials, which were accepted as presented. The group agreed to proceed with security camera purchases based on Kat's recommendations, and Kat clarified that the organization would not follow Willow Waterhole's security model.

Security Measures Installation Plan

The group approved a motion to install 6 fake cameras and at least 6 signs as a deterrent measure, with Kat agreeing to purchase them. The group also discussed mounting locations for the signs and cameras, with Marcia suggesting they try mounting a few extra signs on the pavilion.

Planning Meeting

Debbie mentioned she would distribute a calendar with dates from August through the following July, based on a recent planning meeting.

Steel Sheds and Storage Planning

The group discussed replacing Shed 2 and potentially adding two more steel containers, with Debbie suggesting a grant application to fund the approximately \$5,400 cost per container. They agreed to consider placing the new sheds side by side, with Debbie noting that this would require moving a water line and leaving a gap for a pear tree. Marcia offered to provide concrete pavers from her niece's patio renovation project, while the group also discussed storing outreach materials and party supplies in one of the new sheds to reduce trips to the WCC office.

Water Line and Shed Grant

The group discussed moving a water line 20 feet east and installing a new spigot, which would cost approximately \$3,800 combined with removing tallow tree stumps. Debbie presented a motion to pursue grant funds for two steel sheds and storage racks, which would require documentation of bids and potentially include additional equipment like a 100-foot hose. The group debated whether the sheds were made in the U.S., with Steve Goldberg clarifying that while they were steel containers, they were likely made in Canada or the U.S., and Shelly noted that since they were already here, there would be no tariffs. The motion to pursue funding was approved by the group.

Tool Organization and Shed Maintenance

The group discussed organizing tools and equipment in sheds and the compost storage area. Debbie proposed color-coding tools to prevent them from being misplaced or taken home, with suggestions for using lime

green, red, and purple/lilac colors. They agreed to paint WCG on tools and potentially mark shed doors with corresponding colors. Debbie offered to supervise volunteers in painting and organizing tools, starting with the compost area. Kat mentioned getting a part for a Purple Martin house repair and moving a hose to the pollinator bed.

UT Partnership and Security Updates

Debbie reported on a productive partnership with UT McGovern Medical School, which included clearing an E BED and arranging visits to Foester Elementary, Heights at Post Oak, and Bethel's Helping Hand food pantry. She shared that the Heights at Post Oak apartment complex now uses flock cameras connected to HPD, which helped solve a murder case in their first year. Debbie also described the complex's new strict screening process for tenants, which includes software to detect fake documents and a policy of not renting to individuals with eviction histories or previous residence issues.

Local Apartment Complex Crime Updates

Debbie shared updates about recent arrests at a local apartment complex, including three individuals involved in a robbery and assault who are currently in jail awaiting trial. She also discussed improvements at The Heights at Post Oak, where Indio Management is investing in amenities, including converting a stand-alone building into a senior center and offering their community room for events. The complex manager, Amy Brady, was described as effective in addressing crime issues and maintaining a positive relationship with HPD, who now holds bingo nights in their community room.

Urban Herb Committee Proposal

Debbie proposed creating a new herb committee to manage the herb beds, with Julie suggested as the initial chair. The committee would include both garden members and non-members interested in herbs, with the latter working under supervision of WCG members. The Herb Society would continue their twice-monthly workdays on the beds, and all gardeners were invited to participate. The group discussed the need for orientation for non-member volunteers, particularly regarding herb bed maintenance and aisle care.

Herb Garden Volunteer Recruitment

The group discussed volunteer recruitment and engagement for their herb garden activities, noting that while they have about 70 active members, only 6 consistently volunteer.

Wheelchair Bed

Debbie mentioned plans for a wheelchair bed project to be completed on August 29th with help from Council Member Sally Alcorn and her staff.

Cardboard

Marcia inquired about storing cardboard, which Debbie clarified could be placed in either the compost storage area or shed one, Franco Posa is responsible for building the remaining raised beds.

Grant Applications and Project Priorities

Debbie discussed the formalization of competitive grant applications for Harris County Precinct 1, which will open on January 1st and close after a two-month evaluation period. She presented several project ideas for a \$5,000 Department of Neighborhood Matching Grant, including new sheds, pavers, shade cover for the compost area, and removing granite under the pavilion. The group agreed to prioritize removing tall trees, adding shade structures, and replacing the rain cistern, while Hazel suggested providing shade for the compost area to make it more comfortable for workers.

Grant Planning and Fundraising Initiatives

Debbie discussed her plans to submit new grant applications, mentioning that fall is a popular time for grant availability and she often applies to multiple foundations. She noted that she recently received a \$7,500 reimbursement check for a wheelchair bed project. Julie suggested creating a poster at the next potluck dinner to gauge member interest in various garden projects, which Debbie supported. Debbie also plans to revamp the donation page on the website to clarify donation options and potentially add a legacy giving program for future financial resilience.

Beekeeping Projects and Event Planning

The group discussed Steve Ewing's plans to sell small hives for \$250-300 each and create educational videos about beekeeping. They also explored a potential silent auction event featuring a "day with the bees" experience.

Event Planning

Julie announced an upcoming potluck meeting with a speaker from the Ag Society and Steve discussing website navigation. Hazel informed the group that the prairie field would be mowed on Thursday at 10am, with additional trimming on Friday. The group briefly discussed a grant application for mural paintings on sheds, though this may be postponed due to potential new shed construction.

VII. Reports

Bee Committee Report – Steve Ewing – August 19, 2025

New Hives

The apiary continues to grow as we do removals:

- A second removal from Evelyn Park, where bees were in a water control box, basically a large water meter box.
- Removed bees from a wall of “cubby holes” that had been moved outside of a tile company.
- Removed from a wooden fence with pickets on both sides. The bees were between the pickets.
- Removed bees from a rotary compost bin.

We now have colonies in 5 Langstroth hives, the traditional vertical hives, and 4 of the Top Bar Hives. The apiary has made a tremendous recovery from the loss of all of our hives last winter except for one remaining colony. We are nearing capacity in the apiary, and we have two removals on the books. One removal is from a decorative birdhouse and another from a swarm box behind Steve’s garage.

Community Fundraising Report – Debbie Gordon – August 19, 2025- No Report

Membership Committee Report – Ray Sher – August 19, 2025

1. Unoccupied beds

- a. C7, D10, E2, E3, E4, E5, E10
- b. Wayne has relinquished C7. Shelly, the Clear the Bed Team, and volunteers helped to clear the bed during the July workday.

2. New and prospective members

- a. Patrick Segosebe has leased C11. He has joined the Site Maintenance Committee. Shelly has agreed to be his mentor.
- b. Jun, Jianxin, and Mainan Li have leased C10. Jun has joined the IT committee, and Jianxin and Mainan have joined the Clear the Bed Team. They are experienced gardeners.
- c. Betsy will complete an orientation for Nadia and Myrna Khan on August 19. They are interested in one of the sit-stand beds.

3. Ongoing Business

- a. Betsy has agreed to cover any orientations that need to occur between Shannon being out and Ray returning from vacation.
- b. Based on July's planning meeting, work has started to update the Garden Rules to better align with the current Member Orientation.

Orchard Committee Report – August 19, 2025 – No Report – Position currently vacant

Site Maintenance Report – Wayne Slaikeu – August 19, 2025

Maintenance items to report.

1. The steel rail that was a tripping hazard entering the pavilion on the North side from the parking lot has been lowered. and covered with soil.
2. The boards used to step up into the sheds had rotting supports. The one to shed 1 has been fixed. Both will soon be fixed.

3. Will be checking hoses soon. Hose at C-3 is needing repair or replacement. Also, new gardeners need to be told not to leave water keys in the faucet.

Specialty Garden Report – Kat Elder – August 19, 2025

Little to Report. I accidentally deleted the previous report so this will be short. I attended the July workday with only a few late volunteers (a few late gardeners, not on committee though I requested their help. Keeping the B1 bed and aisles weeded (except for new persimmon shoots)

Persimmons: I've had no volunteers since late June to help me continue the hot, time-consuming task of carefully herbiciding each shoot to protect good vegetation. These shoots, which are spreading still into the N. BF bed, the main orchard trees, B1 and C2 herb bed. This is becoming **CRITICAL PROBLEM!** Without consulting me, some gardeners pruned back the trees (1 shoot becomes 5-20). Hackberry trees are still invading the Main orchard trees also and need herbiciding. (The Hackberry trees are spreading and are problematic along the north fence line among beneficial Oaks, Mulberry, Turks Cap, and another berry bush.

In retrospect I should have attempted to kill the deep roots of both trees with massive applications of Epsom salt, blocking their light and herbicide any sprouts.

Apiary pollinator bed: Beneficial, pollinators, including the large coral vine is growing, despite not being watered nor rain. I'll be moving one of the hoses in the compost area there and Steve can try to see if his remaining connector lock will secure it. The garden needs more water sprayers.

Treasurer's Report – Marcia Hartman – August 19, 2025 – see report distributed to the board.

Volunteer Coordinator Report – Betina Wolfowicz – August 19, 2025

I am very excited about the recent developments:
August has been a very active month considering the heat.

As you all know, Debbie is establishing good working relationships with the neighborhood. Therefore, there were 2 WORK DAYS to help embellish the

courtyard at FOERSTER ELEMENTARY SCHOOL, on August 2 and August 9. The 2 days went well with Debbie, Julie, and other members as leaders. On the 9th, it was well attended by about 20 employees from Home Depot, well supplied with tools and soil, with donations as well. I was not there on any of these occasions so please refer to Debbie's report for details and pictures.

On Wednesday August 13, we had a group of 12 students from the McGovern Medical School, part of the UT health system. This is part of an initial class, they take the first year to understand the socioeconomic context of some of the patients they will have to deal with. It is taught by a family medicine Doctor who was present. Debbie organized a whole day of activities for them, which started with a presentation of the foundation, mission and characteristics of Westbury Community Garden. This was followed by Rachel's presentation of Plant It Forward. Then we all went for an hour to visit Heavenly Hands, the food pantry and resale shop on 12525 Fondren. Another collaboration set up by Debbie. Afterwards, the students diligently cleared E3 from weeds, and half of the bricks to facilitate the start of elevated bed construction by Franco and Mike. In the afternoon we had an illuminating visit with the new management of The Heights at Post Oak. In the last 2 years they have managed to revert the cycle of crime, dereliction and dilapidation of the place. We were all very impressed and hope it continues so we can have good partners. Last there was one hour with the Principal of Foerster School who is working to get the funds to pay for a few hours of garden teaching through the year, in collaboration with us.

Upcoming events:

On Friday, August 29, from 8-11am, we will have a group of 5 people, led by Katie Shelton, Deputy Chief of Staff at the Office of Council Member Sallie Alcorn, At-Large.

From Debbie: "The primary task for the Sallie Alcorn group is to fill the wheel chair bed with soil (it is 2/3 full already). The second task is to clear weeds from E4 if still needed by Aug 29. If Franco and Mike start the work on E3, they may work to fill that bed with soil, depending on the state of completion. It might be that the low end will be ready but not the high end. We'll see how it goes."

Anybody so inclined is more than welcomed to help!!

VI. Meeting adjourned

Respectfully Submitted by Dorothy Smith – WCG Secretary