

Westbury Community Garden Board Meeting Minutes

July 21, 2026

The meeting was called to order at 6:30. Members present were Cindy Chapman, Kat Elder, Heather Erdman, Don Finley, Julie Fordes, Steve Goldberg, Debbie Gordon, Katharine Jager, Mryna Khan, Hazel Potvin, Ray Sher, Wayne Slaikeu, Peggy Sweeney, Xiong Thao, and Shannon Vitek.

Old Business

The June minutes were approved by acclamation.

The June Treasurer's Report or Profit and Loss statement was sent to the board a week early.

Dumpster Cost- Cindy Chapman

We discussed our rapidly rising dumpster cost in June.

Cindy Chapman explained that WCG currently leases a 6 yd dumpster emptied once weekly through Waste Connections. The cost has risen from \$320 to \$404 in the last few months. Cindy and Marcia Hartman investigated our lease, and found it had auto-renewed in November 2025. They were also surprised by the requirements for changing a dumpster lease.

If you want to change a dumpster service mid-lease, you need to take the following steps:

- Decide 90 days in advance
- Send a certified letter of intent to stop the lease in 90 days.
- Show the current company your new contract to offer them the right of first refusal
- Pay for 6 months service

Cindy and Marcia analysed our predicament.

Our current contract would cost \$15,700 for three years; a prospective new company would cost \$8,668. These figures are based on reasonable assumptions about changing rates, but Cindy cautioned that there are unknowns. The alternate company has a lower base rate of \$155 monthly. Both companies also charge a franchise fee which is a percentage of the base rate fee. Our current company also charges an administrative fee. Both companies charge a fuel surcharge, which they can change monthly. The alternate company has a history of changing the fuel surcharge monthly.

If we switch to the new apparently cheaper company now, we will pay the penalties outlined above and be even in 10 months.

Members asked questions to clarify this information.

There are separate fees for moving and installing the dumpster.

The new company offers 1 year contracts, not 3 year.

The city has no dumpster service.

Cindy and Marcia checked out about 5 companies.

PIF, who is behind in dumpster payments, is not aware of the escalating cost.

Cindy advised switching companies and Debbie asked if we needed more time to consider the information.

Julie Fordes made a motion to vote to end our current contract and start with the alternate company now. It was seconded and passed.

New Business

Office of Commissioner Rodney Ellis-Update.

Debbie Gordon received an email from the Director of Planning in the commissioner's office inviting her, Becky Edmondson, Katharine Jager and Griselda(our site engineer) to a "Next Steps" meeting on July 24th concerning our large Precinct I grant.

We shared a "quiet woohoo" and wait with bated breath.

Dorothy Lillig, writer for Brays Oaks Management District (BOMD) will attend July 25 Work Day.

Dorothy, the only non-WCG member who ordered a garden t-shirt, wants to do a piece on WCG for the BOMD website.

Orchard Planning-Hazel Potvin

Hazel wants to encourage garden members to pick the fruit when it's ripe. The hard pears are ripe. Figs have played out. The plan is to prune after picking. Hazel is concerned about the crowding and shade in the North Orchard largely from lack of pruning. She is thinking of new trees and getting them planted.

In light of her recent review of committee schedules, Debbie wondered if post-fruiting was the best time to prune fruit trees. Ray Sher says it's best to prune when dormant in the winter., and a good time to get root cuttings. Hazel has been looking for expert information. Hazel and Ray will talk.

Kat Elder says the Rio Red grapefruit was vandalized-cut and dropped on the ground. She saved some to see if they would ripen.

Cindy Chapman asked if the tree pruning would be in house or with a tree service according to established process.

Education Planning Meeting- Julie Fordes

Julie, Debbie, Ray Sher, Gary Edmondson, and Xiong Thao met to decide on WCG educational offerings for the next 6 months. They are going to survey gardeners about their educational needs through a survey on LGL. The deadline is July 29.

They plan to do a Q&A like the successful Spring Gardeners' Q&A, and also to make more use of our website. The goal is to have a once a month event meet-up involving gardeners' questions and follow-up through the LGL website or newsletter.

Other Committee Annual Events

Debbie Gordon had sent committee chairs schedules of committee events covering the past 2 years. The goal is to have these events recorded and available to pass on to an incoming chair.

Some committees like site maintenance, treasurer, and purple martins have actual recurring events. Others like specialty gardens may have monthly or seasonal tasks rather than firm dates. The task of all committee chairs is to look over past years and provide a schedule of planned events through 2027.

Sign Replacements

Kat Elder reports that the sign out front by the fig tree is destroyed and needs to be replaced. She also recommends a new sign to replace the large one north of the driveway.

Julie Fordes rescued the sign by the fig tree out front. The frame is good and is in the compost area but the plastic sign is rolled up. She recommends reinforced plastic for a new sign.

Steve Goldberg will get a price quote from the person who made the original driveway sign north of the driveway and Kat will get another price quote.

Updating WCG Fees and Compliance Policies-Kat Elder

Debbie explained that Kat would go through these items, make recommendations and pass motions.

Membership Fee

The membership fee is currently \$108. It normally goes up in \$12 increments every 2-3 years.

Kat Elder made a motion to raise the 2027 fee to \$120. The motion was seconded and passed.

Abandoned Bed and Clear the Bed Fee

Kat suggested raising the clear the bed fee to \$120 and denying future membership to anyone who did not clear the bed or pay the fee.

This item set off lots of discussion including the following:

- Katharine Jagar objected to the harsh language and she and others pointed out that E beds were for the elderly and those gardeners will need more accommodations regarding maintenance.
- Shannon Vitek advised that if people need to give up their bed or can't take care of it, they should talk to Membership.
- There was much discussion/suggestions about neglected beds. Kat said that we need to address unmaintained and abandoned beds and aisles. Those gardeners should either let the bed go or get a garden partner who could help follow the gardeners agreement. (This did not include the raised E-beds, which are another matter.) Katharine agreed that a list of people willing to help gardeners might be useful.

Shannon agreed that help from the Clear the Bed team at an earlier point might help gardeners with unexpected life emergencies.

Heather Erdman wondered if a helper committee for those in need might be useful.

Debbie mentioned that several people had approached her about helping overwhelmed gardeners.

Peggy Sweeney wondered if a helping committee or some of those people could approach gardeners after the 10 day weed letter and try to set a date for helping.

Debbie asked Katharine about connecting people with garden issues with helpers. Katharine thought that could be part of the 10 day weed letter.

She said the letter is sometimes ineffective.

Ray Sher emphasized communication and helping others and remarked that WCG was one of the best maintained he'd seen.

Debbie Gordon suggested tabling this item and several others for now due to need for discussion.

Banish gardeners who fail to meet contract obligations x 3.- Tabled for now.

Find a "member for hire" for weeding help.- Tabled for now.

E row aisle maintenance-Tabled for now.

Handling long absences-Tabled

Amend "Do Not Plant" list in Garden Rules

There was an inquiry regarding growing sugarcane. Kat made a motion to add sugarcane to the "Do Not Plant" list. It was seconded and passed.

Increase Annual Volunteer Hours requirement and fee to prepay volunteer hours.

Kat proposed a motion to raise annual required volunteer hours from 12 hours to 18 hours. It was seconded and passed.

Kat proposed a motion to charge unworked prepaid volunteer hours at a rate of \$10.50 per hour monthly changing the charge from \$120 to \$180 and delinquent hours could be paid later at \$10.50 per hour. The motion was seconded and passed.

Updated Gardeners Agreement

Steve Goldberg has updated the Gardeners Agreement for 2027. It features a box of current committees. New and established members can add themselves to new committees. Established members are already registered in their current committees and do not need to add those committees again. In order to withdraw from a committee, a member needs to contact Membership

Willow Tree Maintenance

Kat wanted to maintain and preserve our willow. Debbie agreed it was a good native keystone tree in a suitable spot. The hackberries and tallow crowding the willow need to be cut.

We will have a tree company come back to clear the willow area and grind the persimmon roots and eliminate shoots. We are not ready to commit to a date. We are also not ready to eliminate our shade by the compost bins by cutting the entwined tallow and hackberry there.

Hazel remarked that she tried to contact the Ramirez tree trimmers twice with no luck and she has moved on to another company.

Community Outreach: Harvesting for Health-Lian Dante Foundation (Lindsey Pollack, Executive Director) and TXHHS Snap -Ed-Saturday. September 12 at Westbury United Methodist Family Fitness Day.

Lindsey Pollack, president of the Westbury Civic Club, planned another event that didn't happen. It was changed to September 12 at WUM. WCG is offered a table for promoting the garden if the Outreach Committee is able.

Community Outreach: Varnett Southwest Campus "Take Flight" for 2026-27 School Year, Tuesday, July 30 5:00-6:30

WCG is offered a table to promote the garden if Community Outreach is able to do it.

Debbie Switzer In-Kind Donation and Retail Fundraiser

The Second Act Resale Fundraiser grossed \$1,536 with a net profit of \$1,524.41.

Other New Business

Hazel asked about mowing. Debbie thought it was about time and advised Hazel to check the recently sent committee chair schedule and coordinate with Don Finley.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:00.

Committee Reports follow.

Fundraising and Outreach-Debbie Gordon

FUNDRAISING REPORT

June 16, 2026

FUNDRAISING

GRANT APPLICATIONS

Submitted

Ozarka / Greater Houston Community Foundation

- Rain tank replacement
- Pump
- Battery power station w/ solar charging
- Irrigation to main orchard & butterfly beds

Harris County Precinct 1

- No answer yet
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In Progress

BOMD

- Mural on Shed
- Video

COMMUNITY OUTREACH REPORT

Harvesting For Health – Aug 15

- o Texas HHS SNAP-Ed and Lian Dante Foundation
- o Lindsey Pollack is organizing

Maintenance Report-Don Finley

Greetings, contained below is the activity report for July 2026.

* Inspection of site hoses, faucet and backflow devices.

- * Adjusted/tightened hose on bed C 5
- * Removed debris from area near E Row bed 10
- * Installed extra support posts in grapevine area
- * Transported leveled and installed bird bath at WCG
- * Picked up and transported donated items to WCG

Membership-Shannon Vitek/ Nadia Khan

July Membership Committee Report

07/21/2026

1. Unoccupied Beds - B3, E2, E10

2. Existing, new, and potential gardeners

a. B3 has been abandoned by its gardeners. The bed is set to be cleared by the Clear the Bed team. The bed will be potentially leased in the fall if it responds

well to weeding and solarization.

b. A6 may be adding a 3rd gardener for the remainder of the year.

c. D3 has found a potential partner for their garden bed, but they have not yet completed an orientation

d. A potential gardener reached out about bed availability for growing sugar cane.

The board decided sugar cane is not a good fit for our garden. The potential was not interested in pursuing a bed after the explanation.

Prairie Report-Hazel Potvin

IT IS IN BLOOM AND SEEDS SHOULD BE COLLECTED
THE PRAIRIE AND EAST FIELD WILL BE MOWED SOON.

Specialty Gardens/ Purple Martins-Kat Elder

June workday was productive with Paul, Peggy & Katherine's participation. Weeds were removed, excess Tx Cone Flowers were removed & made available to gardeners for their Home gardens. Katherine did additional herbiciding the still spreading persimmon tree root sprouts. Needs help to tackle the Hackberry(s) amongst the Thrysallis bush.

A few SG members were assigned to guide the GS Troop or work with the Herb Committee & couldn't help this day.

I requested & am relieved that WCG will no longer hold non-volunteer tour programs on workdays. We need every volunteer possible for common tasks.

Insufficient volunteer time again to address needs in the Apiary Pollinator bed. Late afternoon I returned & pulled numerous Ragweed, tall grasses, Wild poinsettias & Matt's Wild Cherry bushes growing rampantly . Guessing viable seeds were in garden compost used in that bed.

Purple Martins:

Wayne noticed & alerted me in early July that the SE House cord had snapped & the house had fallen hard, dislodging nests & doors. I checked the house discovering a deceased PM fledgling, unmatched eggs & HOSP nests which will be removed. The team will be assembled to clear all houses of HOSP nests & begin to close houses until the spring to halt more Sparrow reproduction. Have no count of successful fledglings this season but must work on exclusion of invasive sparrows & starlings.

Will check with Audubon re the closest Mob roosting site to share with membership to go witness.

Will report on apparent Grapefruit Tree vandalism at the BOD meeting. And that I finally received the NWF certified wildlife habitat sign ready to be erected.

Kat Elder
SG Committee

Volunteers -Betina Wolfowicz

Saturday June 27th was a productive work day thanks to the collaboration of several members and non members who braved the heat!

We had Jocelyn who came on her own, and she probably liked it because she plans on visiting us again, and two teenagers from Strake Jesuit. They worked non-stop from 7:00 am to 11:00 am weeding the Elevated beds aisles. They were joined by David (one of our new members), they cleared, especially around E9, but not all and more work needs to be done in this area through the summer. No surprises there.

We finished the stock of cardboard. Call to all of the Amazon shoppers!: dispose of your cardboard with us, and in so doing you get your garage clean! We need cardboard. The weeding job was concluded without cardboard underneath the leaves.

We also hosted a troop of girl scouts. Julie, Amy, Peggy and I led 4 different modules and the girls switched from activity to activity every 20 min for 2 hs. It went well and they enjoyed seeing so many butterflies. But no monarchs, yey! It was decided that next time we have a children group we will host it on a Saturday other than work day such that working with the kids does not take time away from us maintaining the garden on Work day.

The compost was turned as well by members of the compost committee

A lot of work done!

Betina

