

**Westbury Community Garden
General Meeting - Board Minutes
May 20, 2025
6:32 – 8:42 p.m. via Zoom**

In attendance, Debbie Gordon, Shelly Johnson, Dorothy Smith, Steve Goldberg, Marcia Hartman, Kat Elder, Ray Sher, Julie Fordes, Hazel Potvin, Betina Wolfowicz, Kirstene Butler and Margaret Mitchell.

- I. Meeting called to order by the President, Debbie Gordon.
- II. A motion was made to approve the April minutes as written and distributed to the board by Dorothy Smith
- III. A motion was made to approve the April Financial Report as written and distributed to the board by Marcia Hartman

IV Old Business – Marcia Hartman will check on interest rates for the **CDs**. The wheelchair bed E2 we will use 2 **Vego Garden Beds** made from Aluzinc enamel coated metal, they will be 9 ½ feet long, oval shaped by 12 ½ feet wide surrounded by 5 feet of concrete on all sides (North, South, East, and West) to allow maneuverability of the wheelchair. The concrete will butt up to the E3 bed allowing it to have one aisle that is concrete. The concrete will not affect the pomegranate tree although the tree might shade E2. If this is the case then we will prune the pomegranate tree. The bed will be planted until we have someone to lease it. We will use the City of Houston, Department of Neighborhoods Grant to pay for the bed. The grant specifies that the bed must be completed by the end of May. The bed can easily be accessible through the pavilion. We will also advertise in the Crier that this new feature is available in our garden.

Bouquets Garden Club – Steve Ewing will give a talk on Bees. More information can be obtained from Julie Fordes.

Painted Tree Boutique Outreach Event at Westchase – Tracey Schreiber and Debbie Gordon built a community engagement setting and participated in a fashion show. They gave away a raffle prize, a basket filled with our honey, bees wax and some other small items. The man who received it was thrilled. He recently lost his mother, who he cared for, and is interested in possibly joining our garden. We sold 4 jars of honey; 1 lip balm and 1 bag of teabags. We made a total of approximately \$45.00.

Website – Steve Goldberg has been working on our new website. It's very close to being launched.

- V. **New Business** – We are looking to appoint a new orchard manager. Margaret Mitchell is interested in this position. Thank you, Margaret, for stepping up. We

definitely need a dedicated person to make sure maintenance is ongoing and if you choose to accept the position. The appointment has not been made yet if you have other recommendations please send them to Debbie Gordon. This is a Board position. I will say that Margaret is a hard worker and is not afraid to get her hands dirty. Margaret said she would be thrilled to take this position.

Membership – Ray Sher indicated that we had lots of turnover in the spring and we now have 10 empty beds. We need to find a way to attract more gardeners. Currently 70% of our gardeners are over the age of 60 and we have gardeners who are in their 70s, 80s and one in his 90s. We need to think about succession, younger gardeners. Debbie Gordon said she googled Influencers/gardening/healthy eating and invited 5 Houston influencers to attend our Tomato Tasting event for free. She also invited a nutritionist who graduated from U of H. Debbie loves the idea of gardening in groups. It provides a social structure and does not require the gardener to be there every day.

Video scripts and editing – This is currently being done by Anita Long who filmed a workday in March and interviewed some of our gardeners.

Tomato Tasting Event – Debbie has received several emails regarding tomatoes everyone has. If you donate tomatoes, you must know the type and variety, and have 2-1/2 lbs. of each type to donate. They should be picked this week, placed on your counter, (**DO NOT PLACE IN REFRIGERATOR**) to ripen, and on the day of the Tomato Tasting event bring them to the garden at 8:00 a.m.

Task – We need a list of who is doing what task. We have some **new tomato varieties** this year. We will need pictures and a description of the tomato, the name, determinate, indeterminate, days to maturity, disease resistance, taste, and productivity. Kat Elder said in the past we have had too many **varieties** and that last year we decided to **limit the number to 20 or 25**. We also agreed to eliminated the Tasting Cards instead newer simplified cards will be available.

Raffle – In the past Hazel Potvin has done this but will not be available this year. Debbie will need someone to volunteer. Kat Elder said she would volunteer in the Raffle tent. Debbie Gordon has the **Square Reader** and will take credit cards orders and fees. Shelly Johnson and Kat Elder agreed to **run the floor**. **Tomato Slicers** – We will need 4 tomato slicers. Julie Fordes and Amelia Goldberg have volunteered to be slicers. Debbie will make round **tomato** (stick on) **stickers** to **indicate who has paid**. Julie Fordes will be the **cash person**. Do we have enough **tables**? We have 4, 6ft long tables in the shed and 2 wooden tables. Three tables will be needed for the Raffle tent. Debbie will bring 2 water dispensers from home. Ray Sher has 2 additional tables if we need them.

VI. Reports

Bee Committee Report – Steve Ewing – May 20, 2025

Pig Pen

Cathy Findley and I transferred the bees from the compost bin, the removal that I did last February, and got them established into a Top Bar hive. They seem to be doing well

Swarm Trap Bees

I moved the bees from the swarm trap in my back yard into a Top Bar nuc in the apiary. However, when I saw the size of the colony, Theresa Strong, a newbie beekeeper, and I moved the bees into a full sized TBH. Still working on a name for the colony (Pilgrim, Phoenix?)

Split Hive

Amy Hunter offered us the bees from her Langstroth colony if we would help split her colony, which had gotten too large for her hive. Becky Stemper joined us and helped to split the colony and we also put in a new queen.

Bee Presentation

I helped give a bee presentation to three Kindergarten classes at Bellaire Methodist Church, which they seemed to really enjoy. This was the second presentation we have given at this church. I loaned the classes, kid sized bee jackets so pictures of the kids could be taken for the parents.

Community Fundraising/Outreach Report – Debbie Gordon – May 20, 2025

Fundraising

Awarded

- Dept of Neighborhoods Super Neighborhood Grant Program (\$7000)
 - Work must be completed and reported by end of May
- Native Plant Society of Texas - \$600 for planting bioswales with swamp milkweed
 - Work/report deadline October
- Isla Carroll Turner Friendship Trust (\$8,000) - projects that benefits those over 60 yrs old

Submitted

- Five Star and Urban Waters Restoration Grant / National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (federal); Deadline 1/30/2025
 - No 2025 decision yet
- Faye and William Cowden Charitable Foundation \$5000

- Decision 08/2025

In Progress

Next Grant Applications

- Houston Arts Alliance deadline
 - Requests over \$10,000 require a meeting before June 17
 - Application deadline -

Harris County Precinct 1

- Allocating 30% of Harris County Toll Road funds to City of Houston was voted down.

Tomato Tasting

- May 24, 10:00 – 12:00
- PR has been sent/posted
- Raffle donations (leftovers, new restaurant cards, new donated items)
- To Do
 - Need Tomato donation list
 - Need volunteers for set up, tomato prep, and tear down
 - Need to purchase a few things with HEB gift card
 - Need a raffle organization lead
 - Need Tomato Tasting lead
 - Printing
 - Scorecards
 - Numbers
 - Answer key
 - Admission stickers

Shed Mural

- Houston Arts Alliance grant
- Arts and Culture Event – October
- Westbury 70th Anniversary

Education Committee Report – Julie Fordes – May 20, 2025

On-Going Projects

1. Our project to collect information to disseminate to gardeners on a Google doc has not made much headway. We will need to meet on Zoom or in person to reevaluate this project.
2. We will be supporting the Tomato Tasting event next weekend.

New Projects

1. Help educate the gardeners on what can go into the compost pile by working with the compost committee. Possibly a sign and or articles in the newsletter.
2. Release this PowerPoint Presentation on Growing Summer Vegetables to gardeners on the website or newsletter.

Membership Committee Report – Ray Sher – May 20, 2025

1. Unoccupied beds
 - a. B10, C10, D10, C11, C12, E2, E3, E4, E5
2. New and Prospective New Members
 - a. There have been several inquiries for membership but no response after the membership blurb was sent
 - b. Cora has a patient who gardens in his back yard but would like to garden with other people. We will do an orientation for him on Thursday.
3. Volunteers and members have cleared B10, C10, C11, C12 and they have been mulched. Two of them have sweet potatoes planted in them. E5 has sweet potato slips planted but the bed needs mulching. C2 and C3 were weeded but are in need of it again.
4. We need to develop an outreach to attract new members. Shannon and I need help with that. Shannon has posted several blurbs about the garden, but the response has been that busy young people don't think they can take care of a bed alone. Shannon had an idea of starting another gardening group for people who want to share gardening responsibilities.

Orchard Committee Report – Position currently Vacant – May 20, 2025 No Report

Pocket Prairie – Hazel Potvin – May 20, 2025 – No Report

Site Maintenance Report – Wayne Slaikeu – May 20, 2025

The free mulch delivered to North of the driveway is not woody enough to last long term and since it is there, it needs to be used up quickly in hopes that the next delivery will be very woody. I suggest using it up in the wider East/West aisles.

The port-a-potty has been turned on its side twice recently. Need to investigate a temporary way to hold it down to keep it from being easily turned on its side.

When returning tools at the end of the workday, volunteers have a hard time knowing where to return tools. Will try to mark tools with a code such as a blotch of paint to identify which shed the tool belongs in. Maybe tools with pink go in shed 1 and tools with yellow go in shed 2.

Specialty Garden Report – Kat Elder – May 20, 2025

Butterfly Beds and Apiary Pollinator Bed:

Led a too long work days in April and two in May in order to get all of the WCG Pollinator beds looking good-weeded and mulched. Check out the masses of Yellow Coneflowers, salvias, coreopsis, lingering Texas Bluebonnets, and dwarf red Turks Cap. A few Committee members helped me lead on 2 of these days; most help came from outside volunteers, which need guidance each time.

Also resumed the task of killing more of the Persimmon tree sprouts popping up in the front beds and B1. More to do with help, preferred.

B1 is looking gorgeous with dense blooms of various plants, visited by pollinators. Check it out!

Orchards: some of our trees, especially N40 are suffering from lack of mulch and watering. Shelly and Roy Johnson worked in the Orchards, pruning deadwood and low branches in the Main Orchard Fig Trees, and adding needed leaf mulch. Also pruned down an invading Hackberry in the Mulberry tree. Request Watering Committee and Members harvesting to take a few minutes to weed around trees, add mulch around the root zone and thoroughly water all trees and common area beds during the rainless, early hot spells.

North Fence Apiary Bed: Weeded, mulched, added flower seeds and transplanted Black Eyed Susans to the east of the hose. Replacement hose added but locking device was too small; Steve Goldberg will keep looking for the right device to slow hose thieves on our 3 critical long hoses.

Notes on Site Maintenance (reiterated by Chairman): Debbie did a tool inventory and painted tools 5-17-25 still missing many tools and buckets we need (Jeanette brought more black buckets (we're cleaning out the sheds # 2 still stinks of rat urine/feces; Members have been interrupting visitors stealing produce from our beds (we have plenty of signage); homeless people still

present on the property at picnic area/East PIF farm, (elsewhere at night); trash in port-a-potty/theft of TP; vandalism (overturned port-a-potty creates a mess to clean up); illegal dumping in our dumpster; alcohol containers/ cigarette butts/trash; moving furniture (What did I miss?). Likely will be worse when schools are out. Have not noticed illegal dumping at PIF though likely still occurring- Rachel reporting this on South side?

Again request that WCG invest money in two-three strategically placed 24 hr. Game /Security Cameras and recruit member volunteers to monitor activity, especially overnight. Constables cannot monitor 24-7; is up to us to do so and report.

Treasurer's Report – Marcia Hartman – May 20, 2025 – see report that was distributed to the board.

Volunteer Coordinator Report and Compost Report – Betina Wolfowicz – May 20, 2025

I have no new news to report regarding these two committees, volunteer coordinator and composting. We continue mixing compost. No new groups came for the month of May. Some individual volunteers did work with either Ray or Kat.

During the summer months Work Days will be 7:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m.

VII

Meeting adjourned at 7:42 p.m.
Submitted by Dorothy Smith – WCG Secretary