

Two Coves Community Garden General Membership Meeting Minutes

Saturday, June 27, 2009

The meeting was held in the garden, and there were 33 members in attendance.

PLOT REALLOCATION REPORT BACK:

The meeting began with a report back by Stephanos about plot reallocation. Some plots that were empty have been reallocated, so there are new members in the garden. Please make them welcome!

There are still people on the waitlist. There are two ways to get on the waitlist: email twocovesgarden@gmail.com or call the voicemail at 718-512-8649. For both, supply: 1) your name 2) phone number 3) email address 4) the number of people that would garden your plot.

VOLUNTEER REPORTBACK:

Lynne gave a report back on gardeners' volunteer responsibility. Every gardener is responsible for doing at least 2 hours of volunteer duty per month. There are many ways that you can fulfill this responsibility. One of those ways is by doing gate duty. There was a good showing of volunteers for this for May, but June was shaky and not many people are signed up for July. Green Thumb mandates that we must keep the garden open at least 20 hours per week; so working gate duty is a great way to contribute to ensuring that the garden survives. You can sign up for gate duty on the website at <http://www.twocovescommunitygarden.org>. Also, Lynn will put hard copies of the sign up sheet in the shed, so you can sign up at the garden.

A few other ways to volunteer are to help with trash pickup up, weeding common areas, helping with the Community Plot or with the Events Committee. There was a discussion of the large need for weeding the common areas. Some members expressed concern of not knowing what areas they should weed, and it was explained that anyone can weed the common area (which is the large area where we have meetings and where the tent is) and also the berm at anytime. The berm is the raised area that circles the community plot in the middle of the garden. Rosalyn and a few other gardeners said they would begin to take on some of the weeding tasks in the garden.

During the discussion of weeding, Ron suggested that we buy an electric weed whacker. Someone pointed out that the garden has several manual weed whackers. Stephanos said he thought that manual weeding is best as it gets the roots up and also suggested mulching as a way to help control weeds. There was general discussion of this issue, but no consensus was reached.

Lynne asked that everyone please let Kaitlin know about any volunteer hours that you are doing, as she is the volunteer coordinator. This way, you make sure you get credit for your volunteer work. You can email your volunteer hours or ask questions about volunteering at tccg.volunteer@gmail.com.

EVENTS REPORT BACK:

Lynne gave a report back on events. Last week, the garden hosted an event as part of Make Music New

York. Next week, the garden will be hosting a 4th of July BBQ with a focus on healthy food options. It's a potluck, and the events committee will be providing grills for grilling vegetables and meat. The committee will also provide napkins and silverware. The BBQ is 12-4pm.

There is yoga in the garden the second Saturday of every month from 10-11am through September. All are welcome.

OFF AGENDA:

Some points that were not on the agenda were discussed at this point. Stephanos gives a report re: the garden's bank account. There is \$400-\$700 left from general membership donations and also funds left from two grants. The total in the account as of the end of May was \$3,214.63. However, there are a few outstanding purchases that will need to be reimbursed from this amount including expenses such as registering the website name, copying flyers and postage for mailing out meeting reminders.

It was decided that the Treasurer's report should be emailed to the general membership.

Shirley brought up the idea of having a fundraiser, and it was briefly discussed, but no decision was made.

The garden was broken into the day before the GM meeting. The fence was clipped and a wheelbarrow and some other items were stolen. The wheelbarrows were fastened together by the cable and the cable was clipped. The wheelbarrows were not locked as people were having trouble with the padlock. But the cable was cut in any case, so the lock would not have prevented this theft. The idea was brought up of painting the wheelbarrows in a distinctive manner to discourage theft.

Garden members are encouraged not to leave anything valuable on their plots. Several people mentioned items that had been stolen from their plot.

Stephanos read from Green Thumb rules that require people to file a theft report with Green Thumb within 72 hours of the theft if they want Green Thumb involved. Stephanos has the details on this if anyone wants or needs them.

DESIGN REPORT BACK:

Garrett presented a copy for review of the design created by the designers who have volunteered to work with the garden. None of the design disrupts any gardener's plot. The Parks Department priority is centered on the communal area. They would like to see permanent benches, a shade structure and a fountain. However, nothing is set in stone at this point. Garrett emphasized that nothing is definite from the Parks Department yet re: the fate of the garden.

RULES & ENFORCEMENT:

Stephanos began by reading the garden rules (which every gardener has a copy of and agreed to when they signed their garden agreement). The reading of the rules prompted several discussions.

Someone asked how garden rules are created. Several rules are dictated by Green Thumb (e.g. no growing illegal plants, no smoking in the garden). All of the other garden rules have been voted on and created by the garden general membership at meetings.

There was discussion of what people are allowed to grow on their plots and some disagreement over what plants should be considered weeds and the difference between weeds and invasive weeds.

Someone suggested that it was dangerous for people to ride their bikes in the garden and that bikers should be required to walk their bikes in the garden. A motion was made to create such a rule. The motion was seconded and passed by a vote by show of hands.

Shirley objected because she transports very heavy compost via her bike in the garden. A second motion was made to make an exception for Shirley to the previous rule. This motion was seconded and passed by vote by show of hands.

Bernard has offered to install another bike rack in a communal space on the north side of the garden. Discussion followed, and a motion was made to take Bernard up on his offer. The motion was seconded and passed by a vote by a show of hands. Vanessa suggested that the garden reimburse Bernard \$10 to cover some of his expenses. This motion was also passed.

Ron proposed that the garden buy solar lights for the garden. No one seconded the motion, so the proposal was not voted on.

Shirley proposed a rule that people must put red ribbons on any plants, such as nettle, that might be dangerous. No one seconded the motion, so there was no vote. Shirley asked that gardeners please be courteous and not put plants with thorns, etc. into the compost to ensure that the people working with the compost do not get hurt.

The discussion then turned to the proposal by David for resolving repeated rule violations (sent via writing, David was not present).

David's proposal was:

- 1) When a gardener believes a rule has been violated and cannot amicably resolve an issue with another gardener, this should be brought to the Steering Committee's attention. The Steering Committee will review the dispute and if warranted will issue a warning to a gardener. This warning will be made public to the entire membership of the garden.
- 2) If a dispute and accusation fails to be resolved respectfully, a gardener must attend a mediation session moderated by the Steering Committee or outside moderator if this is called for and deemed necessary by the Steering Committee.

3) After three warnings of violations of the garden's rules have been issued to a gardener, that gardener will lose his or her plot and membership in Two Coves Community Garden.

Several questions were raised for clarification, including the following: If someone loses his or her plot and membership, can they apply to join the garden again? If so, how long do they have to wait? Does this proposal mean that a gardener may have to go to mediation after one warning? Do they have to go to mediation after every warning? If a dispute is resolved after mediation, is the gardener's record wiped clean of any previous warnings? What agency will do the mediation, what are their qualifications and how much will it cost?

Someone clarified that the agency that has agreed to help with mediation is Safe Horizons, and they are the only option anyone has found so far in Queens. There would be no cost to the garden.

Several people emphasized that all efforts should be made to resolve issues peacefully and not escalate to the level of needing a warning from the Steering Committee. Garnet encouraged everyone to remember that this is a Community Garden and proposed that we should work on developing the community aspect of our organization. We should treat each other with the respect that we would like to be treated with.

There was much discussion and many ideas were suggested to clarify the questions re: the resolution as proposed.

Kathryn made the following motion based on the original proposal by David but incorporating some of the new ideas that were discussed:

- 1) When a gardener believes a rule has been violated and cannot amicably resolve an issue with another gardener, this should be brought to the Steering Committee's attention. The Steering Committee will review the dispute and if warranted will issue a warning to a gardener. This warning will be made public to the entire membership of the garden.
- 2) After three warnings from the Steering Committee, a gardener must attend a mediation session moderated by an outside moderator.
- 3) Gardeners can also be required to attend mediation under two other circumstances: if the general membership votes that they should or in the case of any accusation of a threat, physical assault or sexual assault.
- 4) Once a gardener(s) has attended mediation, the garden will abide by the decision made by the mediators as to how to resolve the dispute.
- 5) If a gardener refuses to go to mediation when required to, they will lose their plot and membership in Two Coves Community Garden permanently.

This motion was seconded and passed by a vote by show of hands. However, Bernard suggested that as this is such an important decision that the opportunity should be given to everyone in the garden to vote. Discussion followed, and the proposal was made to send the amended motion to the garden before

the next GM meeting and allow for three kinds of voting: 1) by email 2) by proxy 3) in person at the next GM meeting.

This motion was seconded and approved by a vote by a show of hands.

A few other misc. items:

Shirley is the compost coordinator and a master composter. Please talk to Shirley with questions about helping with the compost or about getting compost.

All gardeners are expected to return tools to their proper place and not leave garden tools on their plots.