

Minutes for August 22, 2009 General Membership Meeting

Report Back – Astoria Houses Family Day

Vanessa: Thanks to the volunteers and all who helped out. All went well and the president was very happy with the day

Street Trees – August 24th run by Queens Botanical Garden from 6-8

Lynn: The city relies on a network of volunteers to care for existing street trees. There is no cost to attend this event, please try to RSVP. On a side note – September 26th, there will be a potluck at the garden.

Vanessa: There were trees planted at Astoria Houses and did an adopt a tree program

Growing and Learning – September 19th

Emily: Please volunteer if you have information that you can share, presenters are needed. We intend to have “preparing harvest” “seed bank” and “winter gardening” presentations

Potluck BBQ book idea –

Stephanos: Roslyn and Edith are organizing a potluck cookbook. There is an idea of having a cookbook with coordinating recipes. If you are going to cook for the potluck, there is \$20 subsidy for the first 10 contributing cooks. Makes a motion to authorize \$300 which is set aside for publications from the Partnership for Parks Grant. (side note: from this grant, \$80 was spent on PO box, \$88 on voicemail box, and there is a calendar at printer, which will be beneficial to show potential partners. 500 calendars will cost about \$150. If \$300 authorized, about \$400 would remain. Use of this money needs to be approved by the grant people in addition to authorization by membership). There are deadlines in place and a workplan.

Lynn: Wants to know if we are going to be printing before or after the potluck?

Stephanos: as of now, book deadline for printing is 09/12. Recipes would need to be in by 09/10 and the deadlines will be on line. Approx 250 books would cost about \$2 each. 30 recipes is the goal but we can do more. You don't need to cook that day to submit a recipe

Emily: They should be “garden” recipes, feature garden produce, be healthy, vegetarian and recognizable. Emily would like caveat that there should be a minimum of recipes before printing.

Lynn: Wants to encourage to using a local printer, perhaps instead of the CA printer identified by Stephanos. The CA group uses wind-energy, but her preference is to print local.

Vanessa: Can we look around nearby to see if it won't be too much money?

VOTE: Unanimous for \$300 to be used for this purpose

Further Potluck BBQ discussion (Rebecca not here for report)

Lynn: a reminder that it is on September 26th

Wesley: the permits were put in over a month ago. This time we are going to add meats.

Emily: Steering Committee (SC) allocated \$125. \$15 has been spent of filing street closure permit

Wesley: the rain date is set for the following Saturday, which is October 3

CB1 Report

Emily: July 29th, met with the Parks Committee. Talked about the future of the garden and Garret presented the alternative plan, which is on line. The Parks Capitol planner said that the plan “looks good” and fits what they need. What we understand is that they won't break

ground before the end of this season, but won't commit to construction timeline. The Shed in Timothy's plot was the topic of much discussion at this meeting. It is, however, in compliance. The Shed is a valued and important part of this garden and we have sent a letter about it.

Garret: Jonathan Shun/Vallone's office called and wanted to know when we got a license. Other than that...no information. The license passed from Gail, to Garret, to Stephanos.

Vanessa: We passed inspection, and stated to Edie Stone from Greenthumb that if we were not compliant, we wouldn't have been from the start because we have had the Shed that long. We were not told "no" at the beginning

Stephanos: Asks Vernon an idea about his position, and the position of the people sharing the plot

Vernon: This is a community Shed in a community garden

Stephanos: And now that there is controversy"?

Vernon: I can only speak for myself, but this is for the community, to go any other way would be to go against ourselves.

Wesley: Points out that the second argument now being made was that the Shed is too close to the fence for security reasons. Joanne made a point about that. But it doesn't have 3 enclosed walls and is compliant.

Garret: Some disagreement exists in the garden about the stance – some take a hard stance, others not, if it will jeopardize the garden. The S.C. will reassure the CB that no future sheds will go up without permission and that we are willing to move away from fence at end of the season, but not now.

Roslyn: We can make it an "information booth", and it can be used for meetings

Stephanos: Would it be difficult to move? (to Vernon)

Vernon: Very

Vanessa: Moving would uproot their plants, yes? The CB took up the issue of the Shed instead of discussion of the plans. The Shed is quite controversial. Right now, the dilemma is that it might need to be moved. Some members don't want this to be used to lose the garden. But the Shed IS a part of the garden.

Garret: Richard Kuzami came by the garden and we spoke. He said that we should "give" on the Shed. He is on a CB sub-committee. I replied that it is important to us. We will move, but don't want to take down.

Emily: the property line issue, as she understands it, is a "fire-safety" issue but doesn't utilize common sense

Vernon: Will speak to the others in a plot- we need to work together and maybe this is something that will actually make us a widely known garden

Vanessa: this area was a dump for long over the years. Goodwill now claims that they had "dibbs" for 10 years, but it seems that this area is only paid attention to now that it is flourishing. We are fighting for the purpose of this garden through the Shed.

Stephanos: On a positive, there is a letter at Greenthumb that Vallone wrote to support the garden

Wesley: there are other gardens in this area. We should take pictures to demonstrate how well this is taken care of, in comparison to other parks. General agreement to this idea

Wesley: enough people don't care for their plots; they only come once a week or month

Garret: We're off topic, let's come back to that in the future.

Stephanos: Wesley makes a very valid point, and this also provides a good segue.

Disciplinary Rule – Bernard not here to discuss the 3 step rule so Stephanos describes

Stephanos: Basically, if there are grievances either deal with or bring to the S.C. S.C. may issue a warning. Must attend mediation at a certain point. If not, you lose membership. Membership definition is a bit up in air because it is a public place, the community is a stakeholder. Never really formally constitutes membership. There are ways for members to respond if they were not going to be here.

Roslyn: How many plots?

Stephanos: 104. Essentially, plottolders for this purpose

Vanessa: Are we in agreement to vote even there are only a few people at this meeting

Stephanos: The vote was going to be 2 months ago but the membership not notified

Emily: We should vote. They were notified.

Roslyn: I wasn't notified.

Stephanos: Also, starting soon, I can't be the primary contact, let's add that to the agenda.

Basically, before mediation there are 3 warnings, or an event that is of a certain magnitude, or the entire membership believes there is something that warrants mediation.

Emily collects secret vote. 6 yes/3 abstain. This is pending online vote count. Agenda closed.

Treasurer Report

Emily: We have just under \$3,000 in the bank. CCNYC...about \$2,000 from grant. Also, dues from last year. This year we collected about \$1,100. Considering the requested donation, this means about half the plots donated. We have spent about \$800. We are spending \$125 on the next BBQ and therefore have about \$150 to spend. Other money has certain obligations – needs to be spent properly and I need to break down more for you all.

Emily: Right now, the process for spending and reimbursement is not clear. I recommend approaching the S.C. before spending anything

Wesley: Should there be a vote before spending anything? For example, what about the \$15 dollars for the street closure application?

Emily: I don't think that every penny should be subject to membership vote

Stephanos: Much of the \$ was engaged in wish list from last November. About 30 items voted on and the top 5 were zoomed in on – like equal plot distribution. Side note is that about 51 people off the wait list and about 60 remain.

Review of Rules and Obligations – read by Stephanos.

Stephanos: We will read these at each meeting and keep them open to discussion and criticism. These are online and were read (but not transcribed here)

Wesley: request re-reading the tools rule and asks what happens

Vanessa: we will follow the rules process

Stephanos: (to Wesley) you can record gardens that are violating if you notice repeat violations

Vision of the S.C. – Stephanos asks people to talk about defining what the S.C. should be

Emily: The SC should have two functions – it best serves as an information clearinghouse and also to serve as representatives of the garden. The SC is not well designed for tenure and is useful as an enforcement mechanism.

Wesley: SC should be 1 year term limit, and then you need a 1 year break before running again. There should be a separation of administrative functions. Too much communication via e-mail.

Keith: Maybe have everyone at some point be on S.C. If someone doesn't want to serve, then it's OK if someone's term is longer.

Stephanos: after elections, shop around and adopt “by-laws” from other successful gardens. A community garden is self build; other by-laws may not be a perfect fit but a good place to start.
Garret: In theory 1 year term limits are OK but we need to make sure it is workable. If there are enough people running, then turnover is natural and you don’t need limits. Don’t think S.C. can do a lot in terms of general security – some plot destruction has occurred but without knowing who did it, it is tough to do anything.

Doreen – I like monthly meetings. I am not sure how more leadership would manifest itself. More gardening...less government.

Shirley: shop around to see other gardens. We don’t know what S.C. does. There is no communication with rest of garden. There should be term limits, would like to see more activities.

Vernon: S.C. should “steer” after we discuss the general direction. Term limits to some extent, but if you are good at it, you should be able to stay on.

Jeanne: transparency

Vanessa: I am on S.C. and there are currently things going on with litigation situations that have taken away from implementation of some of the vision and reaching out more to gardeners. We need more general member involvement.

Keith: Maybe a financial incentive for S.C. members. It takes a lot of time to write grants. Might be a horrible idea, but just an idea – maybe through raising donations to garden.

In attendance:

Lynn Serpe, Stephanos Korllias, Garret Ruminez, Roslyn Sexton, Vazquez Diaz, Hinds-Nu-Lest, Emily Compton, Keith VandeRiet, Jon Stavis, Vanessa Jones Hall, Jeanne Farrell, Wesley (Shirley, Dorrine arrived late)

Minutes taken and transcribed by JF