

Clinton Community Garden Steering Committee minutes

Venue: Fountain House and Zoom

Date: 12 November 2024, 7pm.

Present: Andrew Begg, Clarence Klugh, John MacKay, Mauricio Marron, Richard O'Brien, Nicole Siani.

Absent: Homar Barcena, Naomi Haber, Tatiana Pena.

1) Old business:

Membership list: The MailChimp email list has been updated and the majority of the backlog of entering new keyholder details from 2024 has been cleared. There are still some older new keyholder forms from 2022 and 2023 that still need to be entered that are with Margy.

Clarence agreed to update the Garden name on MailChimp so that it would reflect the full Garden name (currently emails sent via MailChimp are sent from "Clinton" and not the "Clinton Community Garden").

The Committee agreed to assist Margy with the remaining backlog to try to get it fully cleared during the early part of the winter.

Rats: John is still waiting for an update from the exterminator and his solution using non-toxic carbon dioxide.

The Committee noted that a long-standing neighbor of the garden resident who lives behind the Garden had complained about a rat infestation in her back yard. She had noted that she had never had rats in the past and this is a new problem. A Co-Chair met with the neighbor about her concerns.

2) Financial report

Monthly report: The Treasurer presented the October financial report via recorded video presentation. The Garden earned \$1,635 from October key and honey sales. Monthly expenses for October were \$387, including postage and website costs, bulbs for the front garden beds, and the second brown composting bin (the first was free from the City).

Investment income: The check from the Morgan Stanley account was received and deposited into the Garden's checking account. The Garden's checking account is in a very healthy state thanks to the high levels of key and honey sales during the 2024 season.

The Treasurer noted that the operating expenses for the Garden for the current year are budgeted to be \$24,000. This should allow for greater amount to be invested into CDs than was previously in the Morgan Stanley account.

The Committee agreed to retain enough cash in the checking account to meet the annual expenses, and to open a high yield savings account to hold an additional buffer of liquid cash. The Committee further agreed that the remaining money should be invested into CDs with

various terms (3 months, 6 months, 1 year) with instructions to roll over on maturity, at the best prevailing interested rates.

The Committee agreed to request the Treasurer to advise the Committee on the liquidity requirements over the winter, and to recommend the amounts to be retained in the checking account and to be moved into a high yield savings account. The Committee further requested the Treasurer to advise on the amounts and mix of terms of CDs.

The Committee requested the Treasurer to make the above recommendations by email and agreed that it could take a decision based on those recommendations by email before the next meeting.

3) Garden maintenance priorities:

Tree pruning: The Treasurer noted that the pruning costs from Bartlett Tree Service is not currently budgeted and recommended that this cost be added as a line item in future budgets. Because it is not in the budget as an expense for this year, the Treasurer proposed a motion to approve that expense for 2024.

The Committee agreed to approve the expense and to hire the tree pruner. The Committee further agreed with the Treasurer's motion to add this expense to future garden budgets.

The Committee noted that the pruner had assessed the damaged plum tree in the front garden and assessed that it is still healthy and can be pruned to re-shape it for its future growth. The Committee noted that it had previously agreed to be guided by the expert opinion of the pruner. Based on this recommendation, the Committee agreed that removing the plum tree is not a justifiable expense, and it should be pruned along with the other trees in the garden.

Front Garden cleanup: An email was sent to all Garden members requesting volunteers for a cleanup day on Saturday 16 November. The Committee agreed to allocate a small sum (\$150) to bringing in some food and coffee for volunteers.

Honey storage: The 2024 harvested honey is currently in the shed and will need to be moved to a proper storage location before the temperatures go below freezing point. Nicole has a house with a climate-controlled basement and offered to store the honey over the winter. The Committee agreed to this solution.

Bench repair: During discussion at both the October and November meetings Committee members noted that several of the park benches in the Garden were in a state of disrepair, and the winter season would be the best time to have them repaired. The Committee agreed to look at options to source replacement wood for the benches.

Subsequent to the November meeting, a motion was made by email to approve the use of the grant from the New York Community Trust to purchase wood for the repairs. The motion was approved by email on 18 November.

4) Garden communications:

The Committee noted that replying to Garden emails is a large and time-consuming task, with the burden currently falling on the Co-Chairs. Prompt replies are not always possible.

Clarence proposed looking at a burden sharing arrangement, similar to the key sales tasks, where all Steering Committee members could sign up for shifts to ensure prompt responses to emails. Richard proposed to have an auto-reply in place to acknowledge receipt and let the sender know that a response will be forthcoming. He also proposed to create a set of standard replies to common requests.

The Committee agreed to explore options for implementing such a burden sharing arrangements. The Co-Chairs undertook to report back with some proposals.

5): Bylaws:

The Steering Committee agreed to put a section of the by-laws on the agenda for each month, so this large task could be tackled in doable chunks over the next few months.

The Committee agreed to tackle first the question of plot assignments, which are not currently in the by-laws but probably should be. The record keeper agreed to consult with Garden members who had expressed an interest in assisting in this task, and to send a proposed draft to the Committee for discussion in advance of the next meeting.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:15pm.