

Medford Community Garden Commission
Tuesday, November 28, 7-8:30PM

Attendance: Amanda Bowen, Lisa "Riz" Risley, Elise Boerges, Rebecca Stevenson, Brian Duran, Joan Parker, Fred Laskey

The group discussed the potentially positive news that the City should be hearing very soon whether they received the grant for the renovation of Harris Park. Phase 1 of this project includes adding a community garden, which could be complete as soon as the end of 2018.

Brian and Amanda reported on what they learned from the Community Preservation Act open session the night before. Eligibility forms are due December 15 with full applications to be completed by March 2. There will be two rounds in the next year, the first with funding available in May and the second beginning in March with funding provided in the fall.

The group discussed and agreed to put forward 4-5 proposals initially to let the CPA know what we are considering. This will include Barry Park, Morrison Playground, an expansion of McNally, The vacant lot on Arlington St. in West Medford and possibly Carr Park. Riz will work with Lisa Tonello of the Housing Authority on a proposal for the renovation of the Willis gardens as well. For the first group, the applicant will be the Friends and co-applicant, the Commission. Brian and Amanda will work on the eligibility forms and share them with the Commission before they are submitted.

Brian reported that he and Tim McGivern have measured and considered the layout of gardens at Barry and Morrison. Tim is working on designs to be ready in early December.

City plans for Morrison do not include the path that runs along the garden site; there is a change in elevation from the path construction that will need to be considered regarding ADA compliance. There is water at the street but existing irrigation systems are not functioning. There is space at Morrison for perhaps 15 plots.

Brian distributed a preliminary plan for Barry that includes 32 beds as well as space for a shed and gazebo. Commission members agreed that it would be desirable to have a central gathering place such as that at Riverbend for gardeners. Considerations include whether the fence against the tennis court requires modification, what historic use of the land has been and how much effort will be required to bring water from the street. Brian noted that the City already made a modification to the water line in anticipation of the garden project.

McNally: it was noted that more garden beds would create a better community feel there. Four more beds were on the original plan. At least six more would be optimal.

We should include a low fence, perhaps 3-foot, as a minimal separation from the playground.

We agreed that some outreach around each project area would be essential to build support and to document for the full application. Existing budgets for previous gardens will help us prepare these for future garden projects. We debated how much labor and contracting to include in the budget. While volunteer effort building the gardens has helped build support and community, certain tasks such as filling beds or laying paths might better be handled by contractors.

Garden reports: Winthrop has been put to bed for the duration of the Eversource project. Four gardeners did not complete their work hours and will not be able to return. The fence at Tufts was hit by a car but has been repaired. The Curtis-Tufts school plots have not yet been fully utilized but they are building furniture for the garden in their shop classes. Riz noted that an Andrews School teacher is building a hoop house for students and soliciting seeds. She was able to provide some from her supply. Brian noted that he'd had a chance to visit the Robbins communal garden in Arlington and was impressed with their efforts. We agreed that it would be good to have someone from that group come speak to us this winter.

The Commission will not meet formally in December but schedule a special meeting in early January instead.