

Medford Community Garden Commission 2/28/17

In attendance: Syrah McGivern, Elise Boerges, Mimi Gordon, Fred Laskey, Brian Duran, Lisa Risley, Joan Parker (and twin sister Judy), Amanda Bowen, Julie Hambrook Berkman

The location for the next two meetings is going to be the South Medford Fire Station.

Review of the minutes was postponed because members had not had time to review them.

Tufts garden: Brian noted that the timetable for building is in flux and dependent on the efforts of the DPW to till the space and have water installed. He is working on quotes for the fence, which the city has agreed to fund), ordering commemorative plaques for the garden beds, and preparing to order materials. There will be 24 new beds in the current plan with two reserved for Curtis-Tufts students.

Membership: Brian has begun to contact old gardeners and those on our waiting lists. Tufts plots have been more than half assigned; McNally has a new coordinator. He's in the process of filling three vacancies at Winthrop. If applicants turn up requiring use of the easy access beds at Winthrop, they will be given priority; and gardeners assigned to these beds will be advised that they could lose their plot in future years if those needing easy access apply. Joan is the sole applicant so far for one of the educational beds. Fred noted that Riverbend may have three openings this year. Plot holders will meet for Winthrop/McNally on April 3 at 6:30PM and for Tufts on April 13 at 6:30PM.

Friends news: Riz noted a successful Seed Catalog Social at the West Medford Community Center 2/25. She noted enough interest in an ongoing discussion of gardening questions and problems that she has launched a monthly Gardeners' Support meeting, the first to be held March 25 from 2-4. This will be advertised widely and open to all.

Adrienne Appel plans a seed starting workshop for March 5 from 1-3PM; all are welcome to attend.

The seedling sale, held in conjunction with the Library's book sale, will take place May 20, from 9-5. Riz had six volunteers so far to foster seedlings for the sale.

Brian was able to raise \$800 from Whole Foods through their coffee sales one weekend in February. He says they are willing to do another 5% day for specific future garden projects.

Master Urban Gardeners' program: Riz described the program that she and Sue Gerould are currently attending. The topics are quite varied but all inspiring. A recent presenter discussed edible native plants and this inspired Riz to think about revisiting the list of city-owned open spaces for possible guerrilla gardening or, as she described it, "hell stripping"! We will revisit the list of open spaces at the very least to see what sort of informal use could be made of them.

Another presenter discussed the Boston Food Forest Coalition, a group working to create food-producing land in several Boston sites. Related topics have included “cooperative gardening”, raising food for all to harvest, permaculture and hugelkultur.

She reminded us that the Gardeners’ Gathering will take place March 18 from 11-5 at Shillman Hall at Northeastern, a great program full of ideas for urban gardeners. We will make sure to cover some of the important workshops such as advocacy and funding.

In future months we’ll want to have some of these local groups come speak to Medford audiences to add to local knowledge about alternative gardening strategies. Groups we will want to talk to include the Somerville Community Growing Center and Groundwork Somerville.

Equal access to gardens: Syrah attended to discuss possible ways to ensure that minority and low-income residents have equal access to community garden space. The grants that fund her nutrition programs (and have helped us build gardens) mandate this access. She distributed maps provided by the state showing concentrations of these residents based on census data. Discussion followed on publicizing our efforts at the Senior Center and various housing developments, churches, food pantries, the Library and the new WIC office. We don’t currently have a suitable flyer to post in these locations and it will be a priority to develop one.

Other topics: Brian and Amanda attended a city design review meeting for a grant to rebuild Harris Park in East Medford. If funded the design will include a new community garden. Other parks under consideration for gardens are Morrison and Barry parks.

Brian updated the group on the Eversource project, to replace utility conduits under the Winthrop garden. The company won state approval for the project but approval by each city/town is not complete.

Joan noted that the Winthrop garden rules have been updated to include the expectation that all gardeners help with one city-wide fundraising or publicity event, as previously discussed.