

Medford Community Garden Commission
April 26, 2016
Medford Public Library

Commission Members and Alternates in attendance:

Amanda Bowen
Elise Boerjes
Michael Lambert
Brian Weiner Duran
Frederick Laskey
Lisa "Riz" Risley
Mimi Gordon

also attending

Joan Parker - Winthrop Garden Coordinator
Linda Julien - Medford 4H Club

The minutes of the March meeting were approved unanimously.

Brian gave an update as Membership Coordinator. He was able to assign all beds in Winthrop and McNally gardens finally. The process required interaction with a number of applicants who were no longer interested or who had moved from Medford. Ultimately all applicants from 2015 were able to be accommodated. The yield was about 2/3 of the names on the list. There are currently about 32 names on the wait list.

Elise reported on the McNally garden. The shed still needs some repairs; Brian has worked on attaching it to the ground. Support from the City is needed to add a proper water spigot and to build a minimal fence. Elise also hopes to design signage to inform the public about community gardens.

Joan Parker and Sue Gerould are the new Winthrop co-coordinators. Joan reported that an initial meeting of gardeners was held Monday and volunteers solicited for the Winthrop steering committee. Brian reported that the Voc School is working on the shed. He is also devising a plan for better water access; he has been in touch with city staff about a system for dealing with excessive water pressure. Water has not been turned on as of today. There are still new beds to be built and a variety of clean-up projects from the winter. Commission members agreed to monitor the street view of the garden in light of some community complaints in recent months.

Future construction: Depending on soil issues at future sites, it was agreed that 2 x 10" spruce or fir boards could be used to build to build beds. Joan noted that these materials would be used to build the Food Pantry beds at the UU Church.

New gardens: Amanda reported that the Mayor has been notified of our desire to build 2-3 new gardens this fall in Barry, Morrison and Tufts Parks. She will follow up next week.

We will be working with the Housing Authority to manage garden plots at the Willis Avenue complex. Following remediation of PCBs in the soil, the existing 9 beds and 6 new beds have recently been filled with new topsoil. Amanda was discouraged to discover that pressure treated lumber had been used for the new beds and railroad ties, with similar health issues, had been used in some of the old beds. The Commission feels strongly that the same health standards should be used for these beds as for all others in the City. Amanda and Brian will discuss options with the Authority for improving the materials used. At the very least, a barrier liner between the treated wood and the soil must be added.

Friends: There was discussion to clarify the relationship between the Friends of Medford Community Gardens and the Commission. Dues for garden plots go toward needs of local gardens. The Friends raise funds available to build new gardens and also to support projects at existing gardens that can't be funded locally. The Friends can also serve as fiscal sponsor and help with fundraising efforts organized by individual gardens. The City can sometimes provide crucial support as well and increasingly will be able to provide Community Preservation Act funds. Having free City water available is very helpful as well.

Updates to bylaws: Brian presented two drafts of policy to be added to the bylaws. The first, regarding the assignment of easy access beds, was approved by the group. The second, covering plot turnover, was debated. Opinions varied about specific language and emphasis. Amanda offered to redraft the policy, including the clear statement of minimum garden terms, for review at the next meeting.

New business: Linda Julien reminded the group of the 4H plant sale coming up May 7. Amanda noted she'd been contacted by a recent graduate of the Massachusetts Urban Gardening program who offered volunteer time to help us with projects. Ideas included creating signage for McNally about community gardens and helping with activities at Circle the Square this summer.

It was agreed to hold our meetings later on Tuesdays to accommodate scheduling conflicts.

Next meeting: Tuesday, May 24, 7-8:30PM, South Medford Fire Station