

Medford Community Garden Commission
Meeting October 23, 2018

Present: Amanda Bowen, Fred Laskey, Brian Duran, Joan Parker
Guest: Tim McGivern

Last month's meeting minutes were voted on and approved.

Presentation by Tim McGivern:

Tim reported the results of a project that assessed two community gardens in Medford, Winthrop Street and Tufts, to determine their performance with respect to the Community Health Inclusion Index (CHII). The goal was to help us to improve on the inclusivity of existing gardens and to better locate and equip future gardens.

Both gardens did well (60-70%) in meeting the CHII standards. These results were not compared with assessments at any other gardens, so the tool is of limited value at this stage. The more assessments of community gardens that are performed, the more useful the tool becomes.

Based on the results, Winthrop Street and Tufts are now in a position to justify appeals to the City to upgrade some of the shortcomings identified, such as pedestrian crossing, condition of sidewalks, etc. There are some fixes that could be easily implemented for a low cost.

The work was funded by a mini grant from the Massachusetts Association of Health Boards to improve the health of people with disabilities through healthy community design. The funds must be spent between January and June 2019, so applications must be made very soon.

Harris Park:

Clodagh Stoker-Long (Community Development Board) will be organizing a public meeting about the design for this community garden. The garden would be built in 2019 but not available until 2020. The new open space plan is under review and Alicia Hunt has noted that it will take climate change as challenge among other issues.

National Grid:

Fred wrote to Fred Newman, Head of Government Affairs, about the status of the site. It is now serving as a staging area for large equipment. He listed all the requirements to be taken care of to use the site as a community garden, such as water, overhead wires, insurance, etc. A proposed rent of \$1,500 could possibly be waived. We should probably meet with the Mayor to discuss this. We'd need to find out if the City's self-insurance will cover a non-city-owned site.

Adam Knight:

Amanda asked him to talk with us about the planting of medians and triangles in the City as he proposed to the City Council last month.

Rodent control:

Amanda spoke with Melanie at the Board of Health about rat problems. Folks near Harris Park have called her about this concern. We will need to address this at the public meetings to be held about the park redevelopment. Brian will draft guidelines about how to deal with potential rodents, including such issues as compost and mulch on gardens. Amanda will edit.

Wait List:

Brian reported that people on the list who do not want a garden plot when they are contacted must go to the bottom of the list if they wish to still be in the running for a plot. Those who are not contacted, though, stay on the list in the same position (application date). There are only 5-10 in that position right now. We agreed that we need a policy for moving people to an inactive list if they have not responded to our attempts to reach them. We need a general policy explaining how to contact people on the list and how many attempts we should make before they are moved to an inactive list.

Tufts grant:

Tufts got a grant for artwork in the garden. The work is completed but has not yet been installed.

Moving to Recreation:

Amanda spoke with Alicia about moving Community Gardens administratively to the Medford Recreation Department. This would be helpful to the Energy Department and might facilitate handling of finances for the gardens. Amanda will contact Kevin Bailey to discuss.

Bees:

We discussed the possibility of having bee boxes at Winthrop Street and maybe other gardens. Alicia suggested that we not do this. The high school is working with private bee keepers for educational purposes. There is likely to be too much concern on the part of gardeners and the public if we do keep bees on site.

Termination:

We discussed the role of the Commission in situations where a plot holder must leave the garden for failure to put in the required volunteer hours or some other violation of the contract. Amanda explained that the Commission is available in the event that a gardener wants to appeal such a decision, but generally the decisions are made by the steering committee or the coordinators of each garden.