

Friends of Culverhouse Community Garden May 25th 2010 Gardeners Meeting Notes

By Catherine Dente

Tuesday, May 25 at 4 to 5:30 PM at the Health Plex (Rand and Clark Rd)

In attendance were: 31 gardeners, including two eager elementary school children who came with their mom!

1) County's suggested timeline for opening Culverhouse Park:

Probable Timeline:

- May 6 - PARC approved the Culverhouse Park project and send it to the County Commissioners.
- July 28 - the County Commissioners will have ultimate say when they meet on July 28. This is a public meeting at the Commissioner Chambers on Ringling, and all of us are invited to attend. We will email plenty of reminders before the event.
- Summer 2010 - If Commissioners approve the park, County Parks and Recreation Dept will coordinate with Capital Management Services for design and construction of access to the site.
- Fall 2010 - Construction begins for access into the site, and the Culverhouses will determine the date to transfer ownership of the parkland to the county. When access is available, the gardeners expect to begin preparation of soil and laying out plots.
- As soon as the county owns the parkland, we can begin our fundraising, too, collecting annual garden fees, and collaborating with the Parks Department in funding and purchasing things like the well, paying possible permit fees, fencing, and maybe a limited number of table beds.
- Winter 2010/2011 - In the happiest of scenarios, we will be planting our vegetables by the end of the year! Wow!
- Spring 2011 - Potentially the gala opening of Culverhouse Park will be next Spring. We can also celebrate our first harvest! This would be a great opportunity to raise additional funds for completion of additional park amenities: a pavilion for education, swings, two-pole shelters, etc.

2) Marci Freeman updated the group about the education connections she has made, and will make, with various groups: Schools, Historical Society, 4-H, Scouts, YMCA. Marci suggested that we all buy a few \$0.51 wooden stakes from Home Depot's lumber section for when we lay out the plots. You can use them later to stake your tomatoes.

3) We went over the costs of opening a park, not just opening our garden. The most expensive initial items are obviously the well, windmill, and fence. Annual costs after that will be minimal and probably easily covered by our annual fees. Marci and Leila have already committed to donating a shed and a gazebo in memory of loved ones. We'll be applying for a matching grant and doing lots of fundraising.

4) Dr. Rob Kluson, Sarasota County Extension Services, spoke about cover crops, agroforestry, indicated the ideal spot to situate a grove of fruit and nut trees, and invited everyone to take advantage of the many, many educational opportunities our Extension Service provides to gardeners. Do visit their rich website <http://sarasota.extension.ufl.edu/>. There is SOOO much on this site, it's amazing!

5) Gardeners filled out information cards indicating the type of volunteer work they are willing to do on behalf of the garden. Everyone will be expected to do some work on general workdays as a requirement of participating in the community garden. Catherine will ask those who did not attend this meeting what they are willing to do to help out, too.

6) We enjoyed a small group process led four experienced gardeners: Gail Harvey (Coordinator of Orange Blossom Garden in City of Sarasota, Gene Penner (a member of our Culverhouse Garden Core Group), and Renee Contratto (an experienced gardener). Here are statements of consensus that emerged:

- We need to do more publicity! Linda Bayne offered to help.
- The gardeners who have paid their fees for a plot will elect a governing committee that will have the final say over questions and controversies that may arise from time to time. At an earlier Garden Meeting (Dec 1, 2009), those present agreed on bylaws that essentially follow guidelines that the county uses for other community gardens under their jurisdiction.
- We agreed to have plots ranging in size from 10 x 20 down to 6 x 6. Gardeners may tend more than one plot only until all plots are spoken for.
- Everyone will pay the same application fee of \$50.
- Annual fee will range from \$30-\$50, depending on square footage of plots.
- During fundraising, we should try to get corporate sponsorships.
- Perhaps sell engraved bricks for \$100 as a fundraiser.
- Try to partner with Keep Sarasota Beautiful.
- Each plot will be planted with no less than 75% vegetables. The garden governing committee will be the final arbiter when there is a question about this.
- We discussed the advisability of situating all the snowbirds' plots in one section. Perhaps the table beds should be in one section, too. Anyone gardening in circular section may include raised beds in their plot.
- We did not fully discuss whether those who want table beds have to pay the entire cost of constructing them.
- To maintain a "good looking" garden during the summer months when the snowbirds leave, cover crops were strongly suggested instead of plastic covers.

People say they like the interesting gardening links at the end of our emails, so here are a few of the best!

Sarasota County Cooperative Extension Services: <http://sarasota.extension.ufl.edu/>

Sustainable Agriculture in Sarasota: <http://sarasota.extension.ufl.edu/AG/ag.shtml>

Interview with Dr. Kluson by *Creative Loafing*:

http://sarasota.creative loafing.com/gyrobase/growing_pains/Content?oid=170589

Cornell University <http://vegvariety.cce.cornell.edu/index.php> has a helpful website where you can see what varieties of vegetables grow well in every area of the country. If you create a profile for yourself, you can submit reviews of varieties of vegetables that YOU grow in Sarasota, and thereby help other Sarasota gardeners.

American Community Garden Association website is filled with helpful information and inspiration for all gardeners.

<http://www.communitygarden.org/rebeltomato/seeds/> and explore their helpful web pages.