

Culverhouse Community Garden

Meeting Notes

Dec 1, 2009 at Health Plex (Clark & Rand) 4:00 PM

16 people attended. Special guest was Patricia Porchey, Sarasota County's Master Gardener Coordinator.

Catherine Dente opened the meeting at 4 PM sharp.

1 – Announcements

- Ray and Bennie Komarek will be moving to Bay Village in the spring. We'll be sorry to see them go because they contributed so much to the organizing effort during the last three months. We thank them for their excellent help leading the Bylaws Committee.
- About 24 people have signed up for plots in the Culverhouse Community Garden so far.
- Lowe's is happy to support our garden in many ways – with the expertise of their staff and with some vegetable seedlings next year.
- We are now a chapter of Friends of Sarasota County Parks. They have 501.c.3 status, and we can make deposits to our own budget line, and they will pay our bills out of "our" money.

2 – About the Lease for the Park

- When the County Commissioners sign a lease with Palmer Ranch Holdings, this will allow the Parks and Recreation Department to begin to do engineering studies and create a concept plan for Phase I of the park: an entrance off McIntosh, a few parking spaces a little NE of the entrance, and allocating land for our garden.

Rough Timeline for Phase I:

2009 Dec – Commissioners sign lease for the park.

2009 Dec to 2010 Jan/Feb – Engineering studies ordered and a concept plan drawn up by Sarasota County Parks and Recreation Department.

2010 Feb - Parks and Recreation announces a Neighborhood Meeting to all nearby residents to show them the initial plans and to receive input, suggestions, and answer concerns.

2010 March – Neighborhood Meeting occurs. (If necessary, Parks and Rec. goes back to the drawing board, revises the concept plan, and holds another Neighborhood Meeting. If a second Neighborhood Meeting is required, further engineering studies will be done to prepare for it.) If most of the people who attend the Neighborhood Meeting like the county's concept plan, our garden group will get formal permission for the garden, and we can start fundraising!

2010 March/April/or May - Construction begins, and at this time, the Culverhouses will donate the 82 acre parkland to Sarasota County. The Culverhouses placed a perpetual easement on the property that allows low impact recreation and education uses. Eliza Culverhouse said a community garden is perfectly in line with her intentions, and has encouraged us since August! The only man-made "improvements" allowed are those necessary to fulfill the above uses so as to preserve as much of the natural landscape and habitats as possible. I'm hopeful that we will get actual approval for the garden site around March. After that we do our fundraising!

Phase II

Opening a Phase II will depend on whether the YMCA, New College, or other entity applies to the county and provides funds for additional low impact recreational and educational projects in the park.

3 – A discussion of how to manage a grove of Fruit and Nut trees

If someone plants a tree in the grove south of the garden, what are implications of ownership?

- Susan Ikoldy wrote this in an email:

Hm, the devil and angel in me are having an argument right now.

...I have to take care of the tree but do not get to reap its benefits?

...What would I do with all those avocados anyway, so why not share them?

Sharing fruits of a mature tree are not a problem at all...sharing the few of a young tree...hmm!

Would it be possible to arrange for fruits to be avail for everyone once it is producing voluminously?

PS - I am hungry so, my initial response is subjective.

Here is what other people at the meeting said:

- Is there a fence around the trees? If the trees are not within our fenced area, anyone, any biker, etc, could just come over and pick an avocado, and we really can't do anything about it.
- We could hang up a sign saying, "These are community gardeners' trees. Please be respectful."
- Managing a grove should be the same as our garden plots. If you purchase a tree, plant, and tend it, it's yours unless you chose to share its bounty.
- If we have enough fruit, we can display our fruit and share it.
- Or maybe an individual might want to display what their tree yielded and charge for the fruit.
- Maybe this will evolve into a mini Farmers Market.
- The trees would be on county property - right? - so the fruit is fair game.
- Stonebridge residents living on the other side of the grove might be afraid of gardeners not picking up dropped fruit, thus attracting more rats than would normally be in that area. Of course, we know that some rats are naturally in the palm trees and in the wetlands of the park, but their population might increase near homes.
- How about a hedge around the fruit tree area so it looks sort of private? Visitors to the park might respect that type of arrangement more than if the trees are just in an open area.
- Add a line in our rules that if you plant a tree, you are responsible for cleaning up the fruit. Have consequences for breaking the rule, just as you would for someone who doesn't take care of a garden plot. That should take care of the threat of vermin.

4 – Promotion Committee Instituted (All welcome to attend the committee's first meeting. Contact Jill.)

Joan McKniff and Jill Callen Bressler (bressler.jill@gmail.com) agreed to start a Promotion Committee. The Garden needs people with all sorts of skills, and now people with communications skills should step forward. If you are competent on the computer, enjoy communications, have contacts with the media, perhaps, please consider joining this group. We'd like a group of four people at least, to start working on communications.

Proposed Tasks:

- Maintain a Facebook Group page
- Maintain the Gardeners database
- Maintain a website someday
- Send out press releases to the media, including H-T, Pelican Press, Sarasota CommUNITY, local HOA newsletters, HOA email communications people, etc.
- Actively recruit gardeners
- Promote the fundraisers activities we'll be dreaming up.

4 – BUDGET SCENARIOS – Presenter is Marci Freeman (45 min)

Major part of the meeting was devoted to Marci's presentation of various budget scenarios.

If you would like a copy of Marci's report, please email her at mikeandmarcy@verizon.net

As a result of the discussion of the report, we've added the following to our To Do List:

- Marci will ask Orange Blossom how many gallons of metered water they use per year.
- David Portnow will investigate the cost of a solar powered pump for the well.
- Jill Callen Bressler will work with Carol and Mavis on an information flyer for Stonebridge residents.
- Jill Bressler, who has grant writing experience, offered to investigate Federal Stimulus money for locally produced food by calling Dr Kluson at the Extension office
- Marci knows someone who is willing to donate half the cost of a shed.
- When citizens do volunteer work for the county, the county will credit a non-profit organization in their name at rate of \$12/hr. When Leila and Marci take the grant writing course this month, they will learn more about this process.
- Catherine has to talk to the Parks about electricity, the windmill, solar
- Jill, Joan and Promotion Committee need to create a flyer that we can distribute to the association residents who live right near the proposed park, to allay fears, and get them excited about having a wonderful park in walking distance from their homes.
- We decided we would rather have out compost and mulch piles inside our garden area.
- Get a written agreement with the county for three acres so we have room to expand, if the need arises.
- ECHO in Ft Meyers uses a tight hedge around some of their gardens instead of fencing. We should investigate this alternative and see what their success has been for keeping out deer and hogs from gardens.
- We will soon need to establish a Donation Committee, a Garage Sale Committee to scrounge up good used tools, and a Fundraising Committee.

Closing comments and ideas from attendees:

- Perhaps locate the well INSIDE our garden's boundaries and use a primitive method such as a hand pump initially for power. Then build up to solar, wind, or electrical power later.
- Ask schools to teach children how to raise seedlings under grow lights, and maybe plant their seedlings in our garden. Marci is actively cultivating contacts with schools and 4-H. David Portnow is excited about helping to get school groups, teens, and families involved, too.
- Jill wants to contact Meg Lowman to see how she can interest her in the garden and the park.

Meeting ended at 4:20.

T.B.D. Next gardeners meeting date to be decided.

Neighborhood Meeting: As soon as I know the date, I'll let you know, too. Make sure YOU attend, and invite all your friends, too. The Parks and Recreation Department has been VERY responsive to all reasonable requests regarding location of entrance, drives, parking, and garden site. Let's show up in great numbers to review what I predict will be excellent plans for the park.