

HOLDEN COMMUNITY GARDEN COMMITTEE

November 17, 2020

Mission Statement:

The Holden Community Garden Committee is a volunteer organization working to provide and support Holden residents, individually and collectively, to grow food, flowers, fruits, and herbs on town land including the redeveloped property on Highland Street. Our efforts will enable residents to enjoy the beauty of our town while developing a sense of community through cooperative action, learning about sustainable and environmentally conscious gardening as well as ethical harvesting.

The Holden Community Garden Committee also exists to foster the education of the children of Holden through the support of community gardens in local schools and community groups. These gardens will help to develop the appreciation of future generations for the importance of agriculture and responsible environmental practices, and provide education and positive experiences through gardening and physical activity.

In Attendance: Jessica Cosenza, Chair; Members: Katye Brier, Mike Trigiano, Gina Tutela

Absent: Tracy Acito, Julie McCarthy

Meeting called to order at 6:12 pm.

AGENDA

The minutes of the October 20, 2020 meeting was reviewed.

Motion #1

To approve the 10-20-20 HCG Minutes

Voted and Approved.

Sign Project

Katye Brier reported that she sent the final illustration to the company. John Woodsmall communicated with the group through calls and emails since last meeting. He is following up with the sign company to clarify the particulars of the proposal to the town, requesting to remove fees for transportation and installation as the DPW will take care of this. Katye and Jessica went to the site on Nov. 4th to place the sign in the location near the entrance, without visual obstruction; this has been approved by John. Jessica and Katye will follow up through emails with the sign company and John, with the goal to have this completed and installed before the ground freezes.

Soil Testing Update

Jessica met with Joel Betts of the USDA local office to gather samples for soil testing on October 26th. Multiple probed samples were randomly taken from the vegetable plots. Many beds had a hard packed sub-surface or rocky base which did not allow for greater depth sampling, and which suggested that the soil may be shallow in some areas where roots might not do as well. Maine Soil Testing Service from the University of Maine showed that the soil is quite healthy. There was no concerning metal or lead detected. Amendments of compost, K-Mag (langbeinite) 10-15

pounds/1000 sq ft., and elemental sulfur 7.5 pounds/sq ft. should help improve soil. Funding could be taken from the Fiskars Grant Money in the Spring- TBD.

To build depth to the plots, we discussed options of:

mounding up with compost- could be done in certain areas of need, may conserve funds

tilling/digging- may get rid of the underlying rocks if that is all that is in the way, but could lead to excess labor and perhaps unroofing other issues as well as carbon release from the soil

Framing beds to build up- would add to aesthetic, could allow for cold frames/hoop houses to be placed, may be costly and require ongoing maintenance and requires a building crew

Leaving the beds as is- thus far most gardeners have done well to individually address issues in each plot and plants have done well overall. May consider discussion of individualized plans if issues arise.

2021 Budget Proposal Ideas

Referencing the emails from John Woodsmall, we anticipate a lean year for the garden budget. Budget proposals this winter would allow for planning 2022 garden improvements. We may consider expanding the garden if there is a greater interest in participants in 2021. This would require loam and funding for a third water tower/cistern unit, as well as labor. We may wish to address the addition of larger amounts of compost/loam to the beds that are present, with or without adding frames (as discussed above). Katie suggested consideration of a greenhouse onsite. The group would also like to make the site more inviting to the public, with additions of seating, signage, ornamental features. We plan to start applying for grant money in an attempt to move forward with ornamental and seating features, so this may not need to be added to the 2021 budget, but will remain a focus in our ongoing plans.

We also reviewed the email from Geri Herlihy whereby she informed the group that we are allowed to seek donations for garden projects. Will clarify again if we are to move forward with this idea.

Further discussion and details to follow at the next meeting.

Grant Update

Jessica would like to apply for a grant from the Holden Cultural Council. The application is available online and would be due December 14. She discussed ideas for funding some seating areas, signage, and possibly asking for some money to add compost to the soil. An email communication with one of the HCC members indicated that funding for past projects has ranged from \$250-\$2000. We will plan to request \$1000 for improvements to the area that will attract residents to the garden and allow the general public to visit and enjoy the site, as well as lend to soil improvements. Jessica will share with Katie, and continue to work towards the application for funding through the Stanley Smith Horticultural Trust in 2021.

2021 Application Updates

Katie to add the new logo. Jessica discussed concerns about some of the wording on the Ground Rules which mandates removal of all "dead plants, weeds...", with the consequence of forfeiting the plot if the maintenance requirement is not met. Historically, we have allowed participants to decide if they will naturalize their plots without consequence, as this can lend to the organic matter in the soil as well as soil and microbiome retention. The alternate argument is that it can lend to sites looking less tidy and may be contributing to spreading some weed populations. Michael suggests that keeping the rule in

place will allow for us to better manage the plots if lack of maintenance becomes an issue for the site or for other gardeners.

Motion #2

To keep the wording as is on "Ground Rules". Motion by Michael Trigiano. Voted and approved by all members.

Motion #3

To update forms with new logo and release to the Town Managers Office as well as current participants for completion and submitting to the town. Voted and approved by all members.

Girl Scout Project Update

Julie McCarthy not able to attend. Jessica reported that she and Julie met with Marissa Pratt at the wooded area onsite to discuss a nature trail. Marissa now has to write her proposal to the Girls Scout council.

Davis Hill Update

Katye has nothing to report at this time due to the remote teaching plan at the school. Gina volunteers to check the site for any maintenance concerns.

Raised Bed and Site Maintenance Update

Raised bed improvements are finished with completion of repairs. Photo shared with the group. These are at Mike Kendricks home. Soil is propped on corrugated metal sheets and covered with tarps onsite. Jessica to send a Thank You to Mike K.

Community Harvest Update

Gina Tutela will continue collecting for the Wachusett Food Pantry. A Facebook post was placed to invite the public to participate. Gina will be collecting this week for their Thanksgiving disbursement.

Next Meeting

Jessica will request the next meeting date of December 15 @ 6:00 pm. Will request a Zoom meeting.

Adjourned 6:50pm