

# **HOLDEN COMMUNITY GARDEN COMMITTEE**

January 31, 2024

## **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 present: Katye Brier, Julie McCarthy; Gina Tutela, Aleel Grennan, Michael Mazloff; Absent: Wayne Dodge; garden participants: Thea Lofgren, Anne Sadick; Selectman Tom Curran

Meeting called to order at 6:17

## **AGENDA**

The minutes of the December, 2023 meeting were reviewed.

### **Motion #1**

**To approve the December, 2023 HCG Minutes**

**Voted and Approved.**

## **2023 COMMITTEE REPORT**

### **Motion #2**

**To approve the final copy of the 2023 HOLDEN COMMUNITY GARDEN COMMITTEE REPORT.**

**Voted and Approved**

## **APPLICATION SUBMISSION UPDATE**

The applications received thus far, in combination with the verbal commitments to return from previous participants: 17 ground plots taken/22; 2 tables/4.

Applications are available through the Holden Town Website.

Residents who requested applications have received an email.

Jess will share the updated plot assignments to the Google Drive.

## **SCOUT PROJECT INQUIRY- UPDATE**

HCGC has received an email about some scouts interested in perennial garden- but not clear on the project intention or goals. Julie provided an update as the contact person/liason for the Girl Scouts. She has been in contact with the scouts and the parent who is assisting the project. Request went to the Garden Club first, and we have made a strong attempt to let the scouts know that the Holden Garden Club does not want to receive inquiries about community project ideas from scouts. Jess and Julie had

already reached out to Karen from the Garden Club to let her know that we were managing the project inquiries.

Re: New Projects- Gina hasn't heard of any but there is a posting on board where Max's troop meets to say contact town hall/comm garden for any projects people would like to do. We could do this, the board is specific to the scouts but we would have to list out our ideas/needs. They can also present their own ideas but we could include our own suggestions.

What are the requirements that need to be met for the Boy Scouts? Gina stated they just need to demonstrate their leadership, delegate, monitor progress, fundraise, show the ability to implement networking. Project itself does not have parameters, just their participation. Gina can put up the poster saying we are open to their ideas. Can either just be a sheet of paper or something designed by Kayte. Gina will just create something and post on the board.

SUGGESTIONS FOR SCOUT PROJECT IDEAS: Cold Frames (greenhouse concept to plant starting in March, great for seed starting), Bat houses, pollinator garden, bench on wood path

Ali Grady- outdoor playground will start back up in spring. Stumps were never recovered. She will use stone now and include signage as to what it is there for and respect.

#### **GRANT PARTICIPATION REQUEST- WORCESTER CONSERVATION COMMITTEE**

Jess received an email on a grant request from Hannah (Winthrop street, Holden Conservation Commission and worc conserve district). This particular grant is due 01Feb2024. Her Committee was proposing a plan to demonstrate healthy soil/lawn management, native ground cover. They were looking for a potential demo site and thought we might have an area to use. Jess noted the requirement to present the request to the committee at this meeting 31Jan2024. Asked for further details, she was updated on our area and suggested we may expand but the whole front area where Ali is working is not taken and they could work there. If they get funded they will come back. Jess inquired about the 501C3 and grant funding. No 501C3 designation for conservation districts as part of govt but she would like to know how it progresses if HCGC pursues this. Town has a non-profit designation so anything would need to be run by town if we use their number on any applications.

#### **FUNDING 2024**

Per email from John Woodsmall, we should expect a min \$1000. Most of the funding will go towards the third water collection tower unit to be built. Remaining funds could cover water usage. There is wiggle room potentially up to \$2000. Tom C was forwarded details as he was not on emails. There was no mention of filing for next fiscal year so might be yearly \$1000 with potential it will be greater than that. The loam and mulch comes out of our budget, so not from donation. But on the website, there is a drop down selection for people to choose to donate.

## **UPDATES ON 501c3 STATUS**

Michael has been receiving guidance and suggestions from members of the Friends of the Gale Free Library as well as Friends of the Senior Center.

All Committee members received preliminary research notes submitted by Michael prior to the meeting for review. Anne Sadick is present tonight to lend her knowledge and expertise on this subject as well. Floor opened to Michael and Ann.

Michael: Establishing a 501c3 status would give us a lot of opportunities to apply for grant money, however the process is much more complicated now than Michael had anticipated. It has gotten more involved in the last 10 years, and it makes no sense to go forward if this isn't something we all want to do. It would involve a large scale effort, group decision requiring agreement by a majority who wish to be involved. Michael has been researching, but is not expecting a vote tonight. Guidestart.com, (501C3 status) has been Michael's source for information from other Community Gardens. He reported that the IRS has determined if you have less than 50K of revenue a year and have less than 125K in assets you can apply for a special status, abbreviated non profit status. Reporting is tremendously less as well as reporting and paperwork. 990EZ, about 20 comm gardens in Mass that have this status. He intentionally excluded large Community Gardens in his search such as Boston and Framingham, as the size of the garden model should be similar to ours. Michael is urging people to look at that research, Michael will update it a bit but it shows the range and scope that this status can give the garden. Salem in particular, they list their vendors in the last year because those organizations can give to non-profit. Newsletter from some, membership fee for people who want to be involved, say \$10/year. Asking people to take a look at information put together and read through it. Pay special attention to the links to comm garden facebook pages and see what they have done using this status. In almost all cases those orgs still were linked with the towns they were serving. There will still be committees, the town is very much involved. It didn't cause a rift or separation, it is a tool not a declaration of separation. Someone from Friends of Gale Free library is willing to come and talk to the group to explain how they use it. A lot of grants will open up to the group if we choose to move with this 501C3.

Ann: works with a lot of non-profits in Worcester of all sizes. Worcester Historical Museum 501C3

Alternatives to 501c3 are available, especially if the amount of money we need is not outstanding and there is a clearly defined project that needs funding. If the town has a tax-exempt number, this may allow us to apply for grants without the work of the 501c3. In Guidestart, there is a document which shows the 501c3 groups need at least a President, a treasurer, and a secretary. 2-5 hours a week commitment, some others are up to 15 hours a week which is a big investment of time. These organizations often need an administrator- someone who knows the financials to complete 501C3 expenses, have to calculate depreciation value. Have to put items over \$500 on scheduled and evaluate yearly. Project like this would need an assistant at 10 hours a week. Is this something anyone is considering giving on time? Would looking for an independent 501C3 would that threaten the town appropriation of funding to the committee. Tom does not believe it will have a big impact but would need to hear from town manager. Michael has stated, there are 2 others with that status and there was not an issue with the town but if we were to proceed and there was an issue we would not proceed.

Ann called assessors office to ask if people make a contribution to the Garden, is it tax deductible? Town called back and said they don't know and you need to ask your tax person. We sign and send out

thank you letters from committee but nothing gets sent by the town as proof of tax deduction. Tom agrees to followup on this.

Clearly not at a point where we can make a decision. The budget is going to drive the decision. Not worth doing the 501C3 unless significant projects, capital gains. For smaller organizations it would be better to align with an existing 501C3 or use the tax number of the town.

Jess thanks both for experience and effort and experience. We have tax exempt number. From now until the next meeting, committee members are being asked to look at Michael's research and think about Ann's information and what we envision.

Jess stated we have had success getting grants without the 501c3 status, and reminded the group that the initial discussion envisioned a "Friends of..." group of supporters who would not necessarily be the current committee members.

### **COMMUNITY HARVEST**

Gina will continue to collect. Katye will create and publish a social media notice for donations to reach Gina by 7:30 AM on Friday. Aleel mentioned that he daughter may be interested in creating a means for a more formal collection system as a community based project of her own. Jessica invited her to submit her ideas by email, in person, or with Aleel as her advocate.

### **OLD/NEW BUSINESS**

- Work with conservation committees and linking projects may be something we want to explore later. Seed sale is currently going on.
- Pest mgmt, scientific way of doing this, UMass extension service willing to work with people but there is a cost. Is this potentially something we can do with the conservation committee? (Michael) Jess will inquire if this is something they have. Michael – Is that just a citizens committee or people with expertise. Worc Cons comm, is expertise. Holden cons people not sure. Tom C will find out. Thinking maybe we send an invitation to join forces.
- Gina had reached out to UMass extension last spring and they don't work with gardens only farmers. They did provide a list of references on pest mgmt so she will locate that email. We do have access to their online resources.
- Julie will reach out to the recycling center in an effort to collect plant containers of a certain size for a plant sale to take place during the Town Wide Yard Sale which is scheduled for May 11.

**ADJOURNMENT:** 7:45; **NEXT MEETING:** February 28 at 6:15 at the Starbard Building