



City of Madison

City of Madison
Madison, WI 53703
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Meeting Minutes - Draft COMMUNITY GARDENS COMMITTEE

Tuesday, March 27, 2012

5:00 PM

215 Martin Luther King, Jr. Blvd.
Room LL-110 (Madison Municipal Building)

CALL TO ORDER / ROLL CALL

Present: 10 -

Nan Fey; Matthew J. Phair; Madelyn D. Leopold; Annette M. Nekola;
Joseph E. Muellenberg; Jill Schneider; Melissa Gavin; Joe Mathers; Nicole
M. Craig and Nancy A. Dungan

Absent: 2 -

Yimmuj Yang and Luke Thao

Others present: Nancy Dungan, (CDBG), Chris Brockel and Joe Mathers (CAC)
and Aleen Tierney

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Fey moved to approve with corrections - seconded by Leopold and passed
unanimously.

PUBLIC COMMENT - None

DISCLOSURES AND RECUSALS - None

SPECIAL PRESENTATION

[25722](#)

New Garden Fund and Madison Community Foundation

Brockel explained that the New Garden Fund's monies are currently being kept by the Madison Community Foundation, and provided some background information on the origin of the fund for the new members of the committee. The funds are currently in a "pass through" account that does not earn any interest, and MCF proposes to charge a 1% administrative fee on any new monies added; the funds are stewarded by CAC. Each December, applications are made to the New Garden Fund subcommittee, and financial requests of \$200 to \$1200, with the average award being about \$600.00.

At the present time, the fund contains about \$10,000, and by guidelines established by the Community Garden Committee, is limited to annual grant allocation of no more than 25% of the fund. The fund is replenished with contributions from community gardens that donate a 10% of their plot fees each year, and the same amount of money (approximately \$2500) has been coming in as going out for the past few years.

Madison Community Foundation pass-through funds are designed to be temporary, single project use type of funds. Brockel explained that MCF is suggesting transferring the money to an "Advised Field of Interest" endowment fund. As of 1/1/12, the minimum amount needed to establish such an endowment is \$15,000, though MCF expressed a willingness to modify this requirement. In addition, these endowment funds are designed to only allow distributions of 4.5-5.0 percent of their value each year. Therefore, it would take a few years to build up the fund balance to get to the point of distributing the same amount in grants each year that we are currently distributing (~\$2,500). Leopold asked if there is a return on the endowment fund – Brockel said the return is not great.

There is also a fund, which is about 6 years old that earns interest as long as the minimum balance is \$10,000. The fund's balance is now up to \$15,000. CAC has an additional \$10,000 in gift funds to give to the fund. There are many gardens outside the city, so would 2 funds be necessary – one for inside the city limits, and another for outside? The other piece to the endowment is the Board of Governors designates 5% of fund be available for gifts – a balance of \$50,000 in fund would be necessary to do that.

Currently there is no endowment fund for Community Gardens, but one of the recommendations is that one could be started. Any endowment would need a balance of \$15,000 before it can start distributing money (this was changed for 2012 - prior to this \$10,000 was needed). The Board of MCF decides annually what percent of funds can be distributed. Currently that percent is 4.75. If we wanted to distribute around \$2,500 per year as we have been historically averaging, then we need \$50,000 in the endowment to make this happen.

In 2011, CAC received a \$10,000 gift from an estate to support community garden efforts, and CAC had initially discussed with this Committee in April of 2011 the possibility of combining the \$10,000 gift with the New Garden Fund monies. However, Brockel informed the Committee today that the CAC Board's Finance Subcommittee may direct the \$10,000 gift to an anti-poverty fund maintained by CAC. A decision has not been finalized as of this time, and this Committee requested that Brockel ask the CAC Board to defer a decision on placing the \$10,000 into the anti-poverty fund until our Committee has explored all CAC-recommended options and others to be explored by a work group as described below.

Chris identified three options for the New Garden Fund:

1. To do nothing and leave the money in a pass-through fund, knowing the 1% administrative fee would be charged on new monies added to the fund.
2. Funds could be moved to an endowment and CAC would add the \$10,000 gift to it and let it build equity, which could hopefully attract gifts from outside sources. With the inclusion of the \$10,000 gift in the endowment, CAC would request that grants be made from the endowment for both City of Madison and other gardens outside the City of Madison.

3. Leave New Garden Fund as is and start a new advised field of interest endowment fund, let that build and let the NGF deplete over the years.

Brockel commented that, if we create an endowment where we need \$50,000 in order to distribute \$2,500 each year, we may become asset rich and cash poor and may not be a good strategy for a program that faces funding challenges in the coming years.. CAC's anti-poverty fund is their priority but they would still support gardeners, i.e., staff, water systems, etc.

Dungan suggested another option that would be a short term plan. Maybe the City Finance Dept. could hold the funds and the Gardens Committee and CDBG could approve their disbursement. This raised questions about where the original funds came from (the block grant program or the City itself). Dungan will do research to see if Federal funds are included in the fund. Fey suggested the funds be left with MCF to avoid the risk of their being used for non-garden purposes. Leopold expressed her understanding that investment returns at MCF had not been great this past year compared to other money managers' returns, and she suggested that we look for a more flexible investment arrangement than an endowment at MCF.

Muellerberg believes that community gardens can't depend on \$10,000 – the money gradually grows long term. Leopold would like the fund to contain more than operating funds, so is substantial enough to – this money should not be the only working capital, even though it can attract additional gifts. Gavin asked if the 1% administrative fee is based on the balance in the account or just on new funds – Brockel stated it was only on new funds. He also said he could ask CAC to make a \$10,000 donation to the fund and try to attract gifts that way.

Phair suggested setting up a small fund with the City – what does NGF mean to people? Nekola said City shouldn't hold money – the NGF is community based, not City based. Phair said City could have control if it was written into a resolution. Dungan asked what if the City added \$5,000 yearly, noting that small amounts of money mean a lot to gardeners.

Fey commented on the value in being able to work outside the City, and with regional partners. If someone else could hold the funds, i.e. a non-profit like Sustain Dane, the NGF would not be bound by the limitations that are on the funds now.

Mathers said there are lots of options to pursue. Brockel recommended the creation of a Community Gardens Working Group to look into these issues. Nekola asked when the CAC finance subcommittee meets next? Brockel stated the CAC Board will meet Thursday, March 29th, and will discuss the Finance Subcommittee's recommendations. Muellerberg and Fey suggested asking the CAC Board for a delay in making any decision. Schneider asked if the City holds the funds, could grants be given for projects outside the city? Dungan suggested that is something that the working group could research. Fey suggested that a 2-3 month timeframe would be good for the research to take place – with goal of completing its work by the end of the summer. The work group could do an update at the committee's August meeting and plan to make a decision at the September meeting.

A motion was made by Fey, seconded by Leopold to form a Work Group that includes Leopold, Nekola and Muellenberg from the committee, and Chris Brockel from CAC and Nancy Dungan.. The motion passed unanimously. The group will invite someone from the county (possibly the Health Dept) to the first meeting. Nekola will chair the work group and CAC's accounting department will give input. The first meeting will be scheduled within the next two weeks. The group will focus on expansion of garden funds and will ask CAC to delay making a decision on the \$10,000 gift.

NEW BUSINESS

25721

Siting Gardens in Parks

James Madison Park - Fey reported that an appeal of the staff's lack of support for the proposed garden site has been filed by Aleen Tierney, and is expected to be on the Parks Commission agenda for their next meeting on April 11th. At a meeting on March 23rd (convened by the superintendent in his office and attended by Kay Rutledge from Parks; Nan Fey, Madelyn Leopold and Jill Schneider (by phone) from the Gardens Committee; Joe Mathers, Chris Brockel, Micah Kloppenberg and Michelle Shively from CAC) Kevin Briski suggested locating a terraced community garden in the area between the sidewalk and boathouse. He thought the cost of the garden could be paid for by the sale of the houses at the park, but Alder Maniaci apparently favors using those funds for improving the shelter at the park. Fey, Schneider and Leopold had drafted a letter that could be sent to the Parks Commission explaining the role of the Community Gardens Committee and stating its support for the city policy of locating gardens in parks. Muellenberg suggested that language be added that there is a Parks Commission representative on the Gardens Committee. It was also suggested that the number of plots currently located within the parks and the number of parks that have plots be noted; CAC will furnish that information. A copy of the 1999 Council resolution supporting community gardening will be attached to the letter and added to the Committee's website; the letter will also reference the Advisory Committee's Report released that same year. Leopold moved to send the letter to the Parks Commission, motion was seconded by Phair and passed unanimously.

Brittingham Park - Mathers said the area Parks staff is suggesting for garden plots is too small – the area has a large Hmong population and there have been over 20 requests for plots from the neighborhood. Feedback from the neighborhood residents has included both opposition and support. CAC has been looking at other sites in the park along with the Parks Division, and will be meeting with the neighborhood association and Alder Sue Ellingson. CAC is looking at the design and might be able to use a “wild cat” (Fiskars?) grant to pay for some improvements. The neighborhood association is in favor of working with residents to find a desirable site.

Dungan asked how many plots are possible at the potential new site – Mathers said 26-30 are in a site next to the play area that has preliminary support from Parks staff. Gavin asked what the neighbor's concerns are – Mathers said aesthetics were a big concern and that many residents have a perception problem with the area. Alder Ellingson has prepared a letter to send to her constituents stating, that community gardens are typically unattractive and are unacceptable to her; although Ellingson would be willing to try a garden for a one year time period. Nekola stated that we would need to fund a garden for a minimum of five years. Fey would like to send an email message to Alder Ellingson to educate her about gardens before her letter goes out to constituents, and read a draft to the committee. Nekola made a motion to send the email message to Alder Ellingson that was seconded by Leopold and passed unanimously.

Nekola will communicate to the New Garden Fund Committee that the original decision to provide funds to the new garden in Brittingham Park will be deferred until there is a final resolution about the space approved by Parks. Any funding approved would need to meet the established New Garden Fund criteria (e.g. 5 year space commitment, etc).

REGULAR BUSINESS REPORTS

[18897](#)

CDBG Update

Phair reported that CAC will receive the same level of funding for community gardens work in 2013 that was budgeted for this year -- \$56,328.00.

[14868](#)

Planning Update

Nothing to report.

[08283](#)

New Garden Fund - Subcommittee Recommendations

The Parks Division has found space for gardens in Elvehjem and Leopold Parks. Nekola will contact Kay Rutledge to confirm their locations, ask for maps and copy CAC on this correspondence so everyone has the materials. \$300 was approved for the Leopold School project; disbursement to be made soon.

[15100](#)

Garden/CAC Reports

Registration is under way, lots of seeds have been handed out and, with the recent warm weather, people are very busy in the gardens. The group advocating for downtown gardens is continuing its organizing efforts. CAC is now fully staffed.

[08281](#)

Parks Update

Leopold reported on the Board of Park Commissioners meeting on March 14th. Over a dozen people working with Freedom, Inc. spoke in favor of community gardens, especially in Brittingham Park. Fey also addressed the Board about the need for decisions on proposed gardens in parks by March 23rd in case any appeals need to be taken; noting that an appeal had already been filed concerning James Madison Park. The draft Parks & Open Space Plan was discussed, with proposals made by various commissioners, notably Leopold and Scarborough, to include community gardens; written comments will be provided to Kay Rutledge by the end of the month. The president of the Parks Foundation, Grant Frautschi, proposed hiring an Executive Director for the group this year to do fundraising; Leopold suggested that funds could be directed toward community gardens to beautify them in high-visibility locations like Brittingham Park. Leopold commended the Parks Superintendent for his willingness to consider alternative locations in James Madison Park (at a meeting on March 23rd) and to utilize park funds to establish a community garden there; if the neighbors agree on the alternative location, they've been asked to drop their appeal to the Board of Park Commissioners on the shoreline location. It is unclear whether community gardens will be on the Agenda of its next meeting on April 11th, but Fey offered to speak in support of the letter approved today by the committee to be sent to the Board of Park Commissioners during the Public Comment portion of the meeting.

COMMUNICATIONS - None

ANNOUNCEMENTS

It appears the City may be charging a fee for its mulch starting this year. Check website for details.

ADJOURNMENT

A motion was made by Phair to adjourn, seconded by Leopold and passed unanimously. Meeting adjourned at 6:55 p.m.