



Community Garden Subcommittee (CGS)

September 13, 2010 6:30pm

Town Council Chambers, Morrisville Town Hall
100 Town Hall Drive, Morrisville, NC 27560

1. CALL TO ORDER

Co-Chairperson Kimberly Goll called the meeting to order at 6:34 PM.

Subcommittee Members present for the meeting were:

Co-Chairperson - Kimberly Goll
Co-Chairperson - Theresa Lostaglio
Member - Karsten Baumann

Subcommittee members absent from the meeting were:

Member - Kris Gardner
Member - Catherine Willis

Also present were the following staff members:

Public Works Administrative Services Manager – Laurel Belanger
Public Works Parks & Grounds Superintendent – Steve Dickinson

Also present were the following:

The Honorable Jackie Holcombe – Mayor, Town of Morrisville
Michael J. Byrne – Attorney with Moore & Van Allen
Robert Smith – Morrisville Resident
Sarah Lehr – Morrisville Resident
Anne Stockdell-Giesler – Morrisville Resident
Michelle Thomas – Morrisville Resident
Laura Marsh – Morrisville Resident
Scott C. Marsh – Morrisville Resident
Rahul R. Iyer – Morrisville Resident
April Smith – Morrisville Resident
Holly James – Morrisville Resident
Celine Sarver – Morrisville Resident
Roger Sarver – Morrisville Resident
Brendon Murphy – Morrisville Resident
Rose Troyer – Morrisville Resident
Donna Willard – Morrisville Resident

2. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

ACTION: Upon a motion by *Co-Chairperson* Theresa Lostaglio and a second by *Member* Karsten Baumann, the motion to adopt the agenda as presented passed unanimously.

3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

- **August 9, 2010**

ACTION: Upon a motion by *Co-Chairperson* Theresa Lostaglio and a second by *Member* Karsten Baumann, the motion passed unanimously to approve the August 9, 2010, minutes as presented.

4. REVIEW OF ONLINE SURVEY FINDINGS

Co-Chairperson Kimberly Goll stated that the members of the Subcommittee were very excited to see a strong response from a total of 166 persons to the online survey. She further invited all in attendance to take a look at a copy of the survey report made available to the attendees.

Co-Chairperson Goll stated that per the survey result, 84% of the respondents were looking forward to participating in a community garden.

Co-Chairperson Goll noted that there were a varied number of resources that survey participants offered to assist in the community garden effort. She further noted that at the conclusion of the survey, the Subcommittee had received a single response for available land to be donated or leased to the community garden. She added, however, that since the survey's conclusion, a few more sources for land have surfaced that are worth assessing. She noted that each will have to be evaluated separately for its suitability as the best choice.

Co-Chairperson Goll stated that per the survey result, 42% indicated that they would be willing to help manage and/or organize the community garden. She noted that all those present had been invited with the hope that they would want to participate in this area of the development of the community garden. She added that this activity would be more "behind the scenes" work with the opportunity of establishing a "vision" of the community garden and what direction the planning of the garden will take.

Co-Chairperson Goll stated that the final question on the survey broached the idea as to what sort of fee should be established for participating in the community garden. She added that many of the community gardens that had been researched by the Subcommittee did involve some sort of monetary fee that would help to pay for seeds, for dirt, and for the varied equipment that would be needed to maintain a garden. She further added that a financial commitment might increase personal responsibility for the project.

5. DISCUSS GARDEN MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE STRUCTURE

Co-Chairperson Goll stated that the present Subcommittee was set up as a Town-supported research team to establish whether it is viable to have a community garden in this area; whether the community is interested in supporting a community garden; and, if so, how would an organized group go about starting a community garden.

Co-Chairperson Goll stated that the Community Garden Subcommittee had collected enough data to anticipate dissolving the current Subcommittee within the next couple of months and forming a new task force that would run the community garden inclusive of establishing by-laws, of organizing memberships, of collecting dues, and of taking full charge and responsibility for the project. She added that she hoped planting of the community garden would begin by Spring 2011.

Co-Chairperson Goll asked the audience if they would like to provide any feedback as to what had already been discussed, and she opened the floor for input from the group as to their experience and their interest in managing a community garden and/or whether they had any knowledge in working with a community garden.

Morrisville Resident Anne Stockdell-Giesler stated that she did not have any experience working with a community garden but that she did possess skills in management and in administrative areas.

Co-Chairperson Goll stated that she felt the group attending the meeting appeared to be very solid and that perhaps the core management panel could be formed from the attendees. She stressed that she did not want to see any one person taking on too much responsibility and that she wanted to keep the project fun with everyone involved.

Co-Chairperson Goll inquired of the attendees as to what they envisioned for the Town's community garden and as to how they want to make a difference in this project.

Morrisville Resident Scott C. Marsh stated that he would like to know more about what has been done in other communities in the establishment of community gardens.

Co-Chairperson Goll stated that the Subcommittee's research had found an established community garden in Apex off of Route 55. She added that this is a large plot garden where the participants garden in a certain area of the plot on a certain day and take home their daily harvests.

Co-Chairperson Goll stated there are other local community gardens that consist of a large plot with areas staked out for independent participant gardening. She further stated that there is a community garden in Fuquay-Varina where all the excess produce is donated to feed the hungry.

Morrisville Resident Anne Stockdell-Giesler stated that she would like to see more of a large plot community garden where everyone would contribute their time rather than the individual staked area garden and that she fully supported the idea of donating the excess produce to charity.

Discussion ensued regarding the type of community garden that the majority present would like to see developed in Morrisville.

Morrisville Resident Donna Willard inquired as to how was the community garden project would be financed.

Co-Chairperson Goll stated that the Community Garden Subcommittee has researched the availability of grant monies for the start-up of community gardens, the soliciting of donations from local businesses, and the charging of membership dues. She added that the community garden would begin with available funds and would expand over time as finances allowed.

Town of Morrisville Mayor Jackie Holcombe stated that the research already done by the present Community Garden Subcommittee has addressed the formation of a non-profit, which would increase the potential of attracting sponsorships.

Morrisville Resident Donna Willard concurred with *Town of Morrisville Mayor* Jackie Holcombe that establishing a non-profit status would increase the probability in attaining grant funding.

Co-Chairperson Goll inquired of the group present whether anyone had any experience working with non-profit entities.

Discussion ensued enveloping the subject of the formation and the running of non-profit organizations.

Morrisville Resident Sarah Leeher stated that she has skills in the area of communications and would be willing to help.

Co-Chairperson Goll assured the attendees that the responsibilities of the core management group would not be delegated to just one person but would be shared amongst several volunteers.

Discussion turned to the need and/or assistance from a Master Gardener.

Co-Chairperson Goll stated that the research Subcommittee had already met with three Master Gardeners from Wake County who are associated with the *North Carolina State University Cooperative Extension Service* and who have offered their services to help with any questions the new group may have. She added that they suggested having free soil sample tests completed prior to planting and having the plot of land examined for water shed propensity.

Co-Chairperson Goll stated that the current meeting was set primarily to discuss management of the new working party arising from the research Subcommittee and that the finer details of the workings of the community garden would be discussed at a later date.

Co-Chairperson Goll suggested the attendees view the website of the *American Community Garden Association (ACGA)*. She added that the website offered a large amount of information on how to start a community garden in a logical format of steps, while also answering many questions that arise in the planning of a community garden. Additionally, she noted the site includes suggestions of what and when to plant for this regional area.

Co-Chairperson Goll stated that the website belonging to *Advocates for Health in Action* also provides an abundance of information on how to begin a community garden.

Co-Chairperson Goll announced that she would be appearing before the Town Council on October 12, 2010, with a report on the progress of the Community Garden Subcommittee and would be seeking approval to continue the efforts in establishing a core management committee to begin development of a community garden.

Discussion turned to the development of a document inclusive of the roles needed to form a viable management group and the tasks that will be required by each position before meeting again to assign the respective stations.

Co-Chairperson Goll stated that she would develop such a listing and would have it emailed to all the interested parties prior to the next meeting.

Discussion changed to the option of the more practical aspects of operations within the community garden. Topics addressed included; organic vs. non-organic gardening; the potential suppliers of machinery and equipment; gardening privileges, and the exposure liability for individual participants. The consensus of the entire group was that these were all questions that need answers prior to initiating the development of the community garden.

Co-Chairperson Goll stated that meeting with other operational community gardens would be of great benefit in order to learn some of the do's and don'ts of community gardening.

Town of Morrisville Mayor Jackie Holcombe stated, in summary, that the purpose of the current meeting was to seek is the number of attending individuals who are interested in volunteering to create the "steering committee" for the community garden.

Co-Chairperson Goll concurred.

Co-Chairperson Goll introduced Michael Byrne, an attorney with the local law firm of Moore & Van Allen, whom has had some experience with liabilities associated with the running of community gardens. She inquired of him as to whether he had worked with any community gardens in the local area.

Attorney Michael J. Byrne stated that he got involved with the community garden efforts in Raleigh this spring when he was invited by the *Advocates for Health in Action* to speak at a seminar on community gardening.

Attorney Michael J. Byrne further stated that something to consider in terms of resources when pursuing the development of a community garden is to rely on what is most readily available. He added that there are a lot of people with experience that would be willing to share their experience. Additionally, he added, the *ACGA* website actually has a featured option to access a listing of all the local community gardens in the immediate area.

Attorney Michael J. Byrne also stated that, from a practical perspective, one of the most important things to identify is where to locate your garden. He added that this will determine what kind of relationship will need to be established with the landowner and what sort of permissions the landowner will provide. In addition, he added that insurance will typically relate to the owner of the property where the community garden is located and that many of the liability questions raised earlier by the attendees can be addressed through the owner's property insurance policy as it exists or as it may be amended.

Member Baumann stated that the Community Garden Subcommittee had previously discussed attaching an educational component to the project and inviting elementary schools to the site so that children can acquire hands-on experience with gardening.

Attorney Michael J. Byrne stated that if the "steering committee" proceeds with this type of sequence, there will be a higher comfort level with the legal and the liability issues. He added that an additional issue from a zoning perspective is that once the plot of land is identified, and

assuming it is in Morrisville, applicable zoning laws must be determined and that will require approaching the Town of Morrisville Planning Department for approval.

Attorney Michael J. Byrne stated in terms of the organization that is formed, if it will be a non-profit, the group can always be fashioned as an independent non-profit or may operate the community garden as an adjunct through an existing organization such as a private business, a church, a school system, or an existing non-profit. That way, the organizational structure is already in place and the existing organization is familiar with how to operate various aspects of their mission.

Discussion ensued regarding the type of liability the “steering committee” would be subject to once formed.

6. DISCUSS TIMELINE

Co-Chairperson Goll stated that the planned timeline is to go before the Town Council at their October 12, 2010, briefing session to present an update of the Community Garden Subcommittee’s progress. She continued that the next step would be to have another meeting in October with the group present and with any other interested parties to assign roles and get the management side of the new “steering committee” up and running.

Co-Chairperson Goll stated that addressing the issue of land is very important and that everyone’s input will be needed to evaluate the property choices available and to determine the optimum selection.

Co-Chairperson Goll stated that working into January and February, the soil testing will need to be done, the work on forming a non-profit or on affiliating with an established organization will need to be completed, and the by-laws will need to be written, all with the hope to begin planting in the spring.

Member Baumann stated that communication is a very important aspect of organizing for this new project and that perhaps an email system or some such communication platform should be established whereby all interested parties could contribute their thoughts, their ideas, and their questions.

Co-Chairperson Goll stated that *Member Baumann* made a good point and that the subject of communication should be placed on the agenda for discussion at the Subcommittee’s next meeting.

Morrisville Resident Robert Smith inquired as to whether attendees at the current meeting would receive an emailed copy of the minutes.

Co-Chairperson Goll stated that *Public Works Administrative Services Manager Laurel Belanger* would email a copy of the minutes to all persons present.

7. SET NEXT MEETING DATE

Co-Chairperson Goll stated that the Subcommittee’s next scheduled meeting was set for Monday, October 11, 2010, and that she felt this would conflict with appearing before the Town Council to present an update on the Community Garden Subcommittee on Tuesday, October 12, 2010.

Co-Chairperson Goll suggested resetting the Subcommittee’s monthly October meeting to Monday, October 18, 2010, in the Town Council Chambers at Town Hall at 6:30PM.

The consensus of the Subcommittee members was to cancel the October 11th, 2010, meeting and reset the monthly meeting to October 18th, 2010, and to set aside October 21st, 2010, ^{as} a backup date in the event that the Town Council Chambers are not available on the evening of October 18th.

Co-Chairperson Goll stated that everyone that had indicated an interest in working with the Community Garden project would be emailed the core management position role descriptions, the list of tasks that need to be accomplished to achieve success in this endeavor, and the link to the ACGA website that provides a list of steps to take and to think about to make a community garden successful.

8. COMMITTEE COMMENTS

Discussion ensued regarding the possible pros and cons of selecting garden plot locations.

Co-Chairperson Goll thanked all who attended the meeting and stated that all site location issues would be discussed at future meetings.

9. ADJOURNMENT

Co-Chairperson Goll then called for a motion to adjourn the meeting, and upon a motion by *Member* Baumann and a second by *Co-Chairperson* Theresa Lostaglio, the meeting was adjourned at 7:21 PM.

Co-Chairperson Kimberly Goll

Secretary to the Committee

Date

Date