

PHCF June 3, 2018 General Membership Meeting

Attendees

- Allison Bo
- Anna Rose Ha
- Brian Th
- Catherine Or
- Charrow Ch
- Greg Ma
- Jessica St
- Joanne Di
- Johanna Ba
- Joey De
- Kayla Sc
- Martha El
- Melissa Bo
- Rachel In
- Rosemarie Ma
- Rosemary Pa
- Ruth Ma
- Selina Ru
- Traci No
- Val Do
- Virginia We
- Will La
- Zach Du
- JP Pa
- Judith Sa
- Chelsea Th
- Vanessa Mo
- Josh Ru

Late Attendees

- Casey Fr
- Penelope Wo

Prospective Members

- April Mc
- Mary Pe
- Dolores Br

Virginia chaired the meeting and started at 11:04 am by welcoming everyone.

Approval of May minutes: it was agreed that the minutes need to be in narrative, full-sentence form. Since the official secretary was not present at the May meeting, Anna agreed to rewrite the minutes, to be approved at the July meeting.

Officer Reports

Service hours: Anna reported

New documents will serve as the open hours sign-up calendar and the project hours sign-in sheet. The project hours sign-in sheet requires the person claiming project hours to sign-in and to also write the name of the person overseeing the project so that the hours can be verified. All sign-ups for open hours or project hours must occur on the papers, not online.

Anna and Lee clarified that the Sunday compost hours count toward project or open hours but non-Sunday compost hours do not count toward open hours.

Anna reminded all members that everyone must do 60% of their total hours as open hours and that the remaining 40% can be open hours or project hours, or a combination of both.

Compost: Rachel and Lee reported

The drop-off bins have been very full each week. Thank you to everyone present for dropping off their compost items at PHCF. They added that the Department of Sanitation has decided to postpone expansion of its at-home compost pick-up program for the foreseeable future. Finished compost is currently available in the black bins in the compost area (aka "munchers").

A new sifter has been built; essentially it is the same as the old sifter.

Help is requested for shredding leaves into 2-3 inch pieces. It could be an open hours task.

The compost team is hanging all bags containing leaves and sawdust now to assist with rat abatement and is looking into creating a container for the finishing pile (which is unfinished compost). It is currently a popular rat's warren.

The brush pile is also a rat's den and is being removed via curbside collection and attempted bulk pick-ups. To keep it small, please put green, herbaceous items in compost (but remember to cut them); cut off and throw the roots in the trash. Woody items can then go in the brush pile.

A discussion about lead in our soil: Catherine stated that her most recent research indicates that lead uptake by plants is not a very serious problem but that lead in the garden is dangerous via dust; which we reduce by mulching the pathways and throwing away the roots (and related soil) of plants pulled from outside of member boxes. As a result, greens from all areas of the garden can go in compost.

A request was made to update the sign by the compost stating how much compost we have processed. Lee said he would take care of it.

Extra compost volunteers are always welcome. Please email compost@phcfarm.com if you would like to get involved.

Communication: no report

Boxes: Anna reported

Anna stated that the boxes are all assigned. There are 5 new people in boxes, 11 box shares, and 6 communal box gardeners. Of the 34 people on the private box waitlist, only 10 do not currently have gardening space, which includes some new members.

Master Gardener: Joey primarily reported

Joey's report focused on the water collection system and the fact that it is broken.

Background: We collect rainwater from the roof of the building adjacent to the garden's west side. Marjory lives there and her son Phil is our contact with them. Virginia and others emphasized that they have been long-term friends of the garden. The rain catchment system did not collect water in the 2017 season and has not collected water this season either.

On June 2, 2018, Joey investigated the system with Phil, paying most attention to the roof and gutter system on the building. Joey reported that they discovered a vine was pulling the downspout off the building. Joey and others cut back the vine. Discussion included that there may be gaps in the tank part of the system instead because it seemed that the gutter, once reattached to the downspout, was in good order.

The discussion revolved around potential fixes and tests that should be run, including running the hose directly into the tanks (skipping the downspout) to check the condition of the fittings, tubes, and tanks. Virginia had reached out to BANG, GrowNYC, and BBG to see if they had any helpful contacts and they all recommended the same contractor: Greenwood Robinson. Should we hire him or someone similar immediately, or do more tests ourselves? If we wait too long we might miss the rains.

Melissa made the following motion: "I move that Joey gets authorization to contact Greenwood Robinson, or another contractor, to analyze and fix the water catchment system, allowing for a cost of up to \$500, and if beyond that price the Board is authorized to approve the cost." The motion was seconded and passed, with one abstention.

Treasurer: Martha reported

Martha reported the following approximate balances:

- ~\$5,500 in bank account
- ~\$350 in petty cash
- Income (included in above)
 - ~\$1,040 from the plant sale
 - ~\$1400 thus far from dues
- Spending (included in above)
 - ~\$350 on rat abatement (including gravel, bait boxes, poison, circular saw, replacement lids, safety masks, s-hooks)

She still needs a co-treasurer whose duties would involve helping to track dues, sharing the tax exempt form for purchases, and preferable training to be the treasurer next season. The position would potentially halve the office holder's service hour requirements.

Martha shared with prospective members that dues are on a sliding scale from \$5-\$25.

BANG: Joanne reported

BANG had a meeting at Warren-St. Marks on June 2, 2018. The gardens present reported that they were all happy with their plant sales.

There are three important updates from BANG:

1. BANG's social media committee is making progress and requesting help. Please let Louise know if you are skilled in social media.
2. The Department of Health has an old address for BANG, if anyone knows a contact there on how to change the address in DOH's system, please share with Joanne.
3. Rats are a problem at other gardens but BANG received a letter directed to PHCF being in violation of city health codes. Joanne read the letter to the sound of triumphant music playing in the background from a festival at PS 9. The letter was from early May, and detailed how the city expects the garden to fix the situation. The language indicated that rather than shutting us down, the city would forward the bill of extermination services conducted by the city if it decided we aren't making progress on our own. Discussion included the worry that we are an organic garden and the city might not respect that, and that we don't know what it would cost. Virginia added that the garden's east border neighbor was fined for their rat issue.

Joey asked Joanne if money from City Councilperson Cumbo, distributed via BANG and usually referred to as "BANG Money," could be used to fix the water catchment system. Joanne replied that it still isn't clear what the money can be used for, but probably not because it needs to be used for "programming." A member added that Warren-St.Marks has water catchment on their shed and chicken coop structures; maybe we could do that with our shed and greenhouse and not need to worry about the neighbor's roof.

Coordinator: no report

Rat Committee Report: Greg reported

The garden set ambitious goals at the last meeting for rat abatement and, despite working hard toward them, the rats are still winning. In the past month the following has occurred:

- Removed lumber off the ground in the back and built a lumber rack (thank you Traci)
- Brick and rock pile has been removed
- Stage has been temporarily moved
- Bundles have consistently been taken to curb for pick-up
- Two bulk pick-ups were prepped for and scheduled, but they failed to show up
- New bait boxes were put out but seem untouched
- Compost is now hanging the bags of leaves and may hang more things that can be hung
- DOH is inspecting again on June 11, 2018

Greg shared that the next steps involved more bait boxes, gravel, and to decide what to do with the stage.

A member asked whether we can coordinate rat abatement through BANG. The answer was that it is a big, likely slow process, but it isn't off the table.

Brian emphasized the need to reach out to elected officials because we are not the cause of the problem. Another member brought up that a forum will take place on June 5, 2018 at PS 9 from 6 pm to 8 pm with Laurie Cumbo and Jesse Hamilton on the rat issue. Kathy moved that we formally designate two people to represent the garden at the meeting; Lee seconded it. While this was happening, Virginia and Greg were already volunteering to go. Their decision was applauded and Brian might go also.

Other discussion points included:

- It seems that sanitation pick-ups have changed, at least on Vanderbilt. Calling 311 can help, especially with adding new trash cans on street corners.
- What about hiring a terrier organization to come and hunt the rats?
- The rats are burrowing and pooping/peeing in the compost finishing pile (which is different from the finished compost). Maybe we build a bin instead of leaving it as a pile.

Joey made the following motion: "I move that we dismantle and discard the stage." Lee seconded it. Discussion started. Traci listed other options including raising the stage so that DOH can inspect underneath it. This would require lifting it about two feet and building a guardrail. Another idea was to tip the stage against something, like a murphy bed, so that it would no longer provide shelter to rats. Members discussed how often the stage is used and for what purposes. It has been used for the plant sales, school groups, and music performances. Joey stated that these happen infrequently; he and other members stated that the activities could happen elsewhere. Melissa stated that since the rats are a pressing problem, we should remove as many things that make them happy as possible. Removing the stage would also allow us to simplify and focus on gardening and natural space. The motion passed with 20 ayes, 1 nay, and 8 abstentions.

New Business:

- Charrow shared plans to hold a watercoloring day in the garden on June 10, 2018 from Noon to 3:30 pm. It will be mainly for children, involve a demonstration, and allow for potential paintings to be mod-podged to wood blocks for use as decoration throughout the garden. Everyone thought this was a great idea.
- Zach made a proposal, responding to Joanne's request on the listserv, to do a terrarium build along as the garden's event for GrowNYC's Open Garden day on July 14th. He requested a sum of up to \$200 for supplies; he would attempt to seek donations to keep the cost as low as possible. The proposal was discussed and approved. Zach will update the membership via the listserv and at the next meeting.

The next meeting is scheduled for July 11, 2018, 7:00 - 8:00 pm. This will be a potluck meeting so please bring an item to share.

Accolades were given by all to Rosemarie for her excellent work on the plant sale!

Meeting adjourned around 12:25.

Minutes respectfully submitted by Zach Dugan