

Fairacres Road Allotment Association
Annual General Meeting
Friday March 22nd 2013, 7.30pm
22nd Sea Scouts Hall, Meadow Lane, Oxford.

19 present.

Apologies for Absence.

Dean Rudman, Jay Arden, Larissa Wakefield, Christine Cox, Jocelyn Bell, Dudley Walter, Simon Fisher

2012 minutes

Minutes of 2012 were passed with no amendments or queries.

Matters arising

None

Chairs report- Jennie Rudman

Jennie noted that despite the appalling weather, some people had managed to maintain their plots in great condition and should be congratulated. Apparently the judges from a recent allotment inspection indicated that the standard was higher than usual. Jennie also noted that due to the bad weather there had been less working parties and that the apple tasting had been cancelled. However, the fencing working party was very successful. We are hoping for a better summer. Oxford city council are currently assessing all of their properties. We have had an inspection, and information about water and services will be used for a rent review. All sites are currently being assessed.

Secretaries report- Tim Humphrey

Jeremy Arden was thanked for his work as secretary, however he has now stepped down. Tim Humphrey has been the acting secretary. He noted that the website had been up for a year now and was receiving a surprising amount of international attention. He plans to put the rules and constitution on the website - www.fairacresallotments.org. It was noted in discussions that a number of people were not receiving emails about upcoming events, including the AGM. It was also noted that it would be helpful to know when the working parties were being held. This could be advertised both on the web and by email.

Treasurers report- Stephen Kearsey

We are £700 better off this year than last year, which was in part due to donations. £260 was raised in donations above rent and there was also reduced expenditure. For example, the water bill was reduced, partly due to the hosepipe ban. The insurance has also been reduced to £2 per plot. However, the strimmer needed to be replaced. In addition we received a grant from OCC for fencing repairs.

Letting secretaries report- Claire de Feu (absent-written report sent)

Nine plots have been let since 1st March 2012. There are currently 61 people on the

waiting list. 3 people have been taken off the list having failed to respond to several phone messages.

There was discussion regarding the importance of keeping plots well maintained. Given that Claire will be stepping down it was noted that it would be important to keep track of who had been approached regarding maintenance of their plot and a report to the committee would be useful in this respect. It was also noted that it was important that the rules regarding plot upkeep be observed. In this respect having the rules on the website would be helpful.

There is currently a 3-stage process: 1. Enquiries are made 2. A letter is sent. 3. A final letter from the committee is sent asking them to leave. Correspondence could be by email as well as letter. The role of the link person was also highlighted, as they should have knowledge of the plot holders and any mitigating circumstances arising around poorly maintained plots. Given that sites that are badly managed are reconsidered by the council, it will be important to balance the needs of the site with those of individual plot holders. More social occasions were requested to help get to know people on other plots.

Re-election of committee

Jennie, Claire and Larissa stepped down and were thanked for their hard work. Tim, Stephen and Julia agreed to stay on.

Clive proposed and Jon seconded the re-election of Tim, Stephen and Julia. Jon Piggott and Jane King were elected to the committee, which now includes the following:

Julia Hollander
Stephen Kearsey (treasurer)
Tim Humphrey (acting secretary)
Lynn Errey (Trustee)
Christine Cox (Trustee –final year).
Jon Piggott
Jane King

Tree Pruning- Julia Hollander

There has been considerable volume of emails about cutting back the Oxford Preservation Trust trees on the south and west sides of the site.

The council tree surgeons have costed this at half the original tree surgeons' price and OPT have agreed to pay. The west and the south side is going to be radically cut back.

The willow trees are meant to be taken out. Trees will be taken out on the west side so as to allow more light for allotments near the trees. Julia was thanked for her efforts in bringing sunshine to the allotments. It was noted in discussions that there was a drainage ditch all the way around the allotment. Rebuilding this could improve drainage. There was a safety concern raised that the trees could currently come down in high wind.

Polytunnel repairs.

Jon Piggott reported that both the Orchard polytunnel and the Meadow Lane polytunnel

are in a poor state. Not enough light is coming in and they need to be repaired and coating replaced in the Orchard polytunnel. The cost is in the region of £130 and will be a considerable job to do. The meadow lane polytunnel is not so bad. However, despite the tunnels being available to all, their state perhaps puts people off using them.

It was agreed at the AGM that money would be used to repair the orchard polytunnel, and that they should be policed more closely. They both contained a number of apparently abandoned items. In this regard, we need to develop a system to make people responsible for their upkeep - for example, they should put plot numbers on all items.

From discussions it was agreed that there should be benches on both sides of the Orchard polytunnel for seed propagation. David Morris offered to look into doing this. It was agreed that there should be a printed set of rules on display for how to use the polytunnels, together with a point of contact. In this respect, John Piggott agreed to be the contact for the Meadow Lane polytunnel and Julia would be the Orchard polytunnel contact person. This information should be disseminated by email as well as on the gate and in the tunnels. The possibility of a hard surface around the polytunnels was also raised.

Pruning of the perimeter fence.

Jocelyn has extended the work of the working party in continuing the pruning the perimeter fence along Meadow Lane, and was thanked by the committee.

There was discussion as to whether the internal fence pruning and should be tackled by plot holders, working parties, the council or commercially.

It was noted that historically this was never really properly tackled by working parties. It was therefore agreed that plot holders who have fencing should maintain the inner side of the fencing while the outside was maintained by the council. It will be proposed to get the fencing done by the end of the year. The idea of having the pruning finished so that wood could be used for Guy Fawkes night was also suggested.

New lock combination

We will have new combination locks on the gate and the shed. Plot holders are requested to keep their old keys, just in case we have to resort to using the old padlock again.

It was noted that all the equipment in the shed is available to all members.

The site combination number will change on 1st April. It was noted that it was important to close the lock (not necessarily locking it around the gate) when people come in order to protect the lock.

Insurance

We have third party (public liability) insurance through the federation only.

If we brought a contractor on site they should have their own insurance.

Any other business

Machinery

It was clarified that the stolen machinery was replaced but was not brand new. People were asked to clean and maintain the mowers. It could also be clearer which fuel goes into which machine. The labeling could be refreshed.

The orchard activity.

David Morris reported that because of the cold and wet, with no insects around to pollinate, we only had 6 fruit off all of the trees last season.

Recently he has fertilized the trees and cut around them, and has done some pruning.

We now have a patch at the bottom end of the orchard which used to contain compost bins. This has been reclaimed but is wasted at the moment. In this respect the orchard could be extended, perhaps with fig trees or possibly we could have another plot there. It was considered that we should wait until the fence pruning has been done to see how feasible this looks. It was noted that this used to be a bad plot. We will wait until the end of the summer to make any decision on this area.

Social events

If anyone would like to organize the barbecue or other events during or after the school holidays, they would be very welcome - they should make themselves known to the committee. Events will be clearly advertised both on the web and by email.

The gate

The gap under the gate could be closed up. There has to be vehicular access must be maintained. David Morris has offered to look into this, using wood.

The shed

David Morris was happy to maintain this including marking fuels and the first aid kit.

A skip?

The presence of a skip was suggested, although it is quite expensive (£200 pounds per skip). The committee agreed to look into this. Historically there have been skips and it was also noted that people exploit the situation by dumping waste from off-site. As a general rule, if people bring things to the allotment they should take things away too.

The committee.

Ideally, the committee should be larger. It was proposed that members of the Association should propose new members through the year to come; the responsibility of selecting a chair and secretary should be taken from within the committee. This was proposed by Liz and seconded.

Following discussions, Jon Piggott kindly agreed to be the new Chair.

Tim Humphrey agreed to continue as joint Secretary with Julia Hollander.

Claire will stay on as Lettings Secretary until replaced.

Stephen Kearsy will remain as Treasurer.