

Hackney Allotment Society
Minutes of the Annual General Meeting
Held Wednesday 1st October 2008 St Mary's Community Centre N16

Present: Maggie Wilkinson (Chair), Sue Carling (Secretary), Jackie Breakwell (Treasurer); Committee members; Mary Connolly (minutes), Jessica Datta, Henrietta Soames, Amanda Scope, Gavin Everall, Eugene Clerkin, 17 members from the waiting list, 7 from Aden Terrace, 4 from Church Walk, 4 from Leaside, 3 from Spring Lane, 2 from Spring Hill, 2 from St. Kilda's and 1 from Overbury Street.

Apologies

Apologies received from Andrea Montgomery (Overbury Street), Diana Whitworth (Leaside), Joss Bany, Pat Corrigan (Spring Hill), Yvette Cuff (waiting list) and Chrissie Bowler.

Matters Arising

The minutes of the AGM 2007 were agreed as accurate and there were no matters arising.

Report from the Chair

There were fewer contentious events over the last year and a good deal of progress.

Progress over the year:

- Springhill - good co-operation from park manager John Zeraschi, more benches and gate keys from him, help with rubbish removal; wheelbarrows bought, new composter built and most excitingly orchard planted in December 07.
- St Kilda's - at last trees on adjacent land taken down, thanks to Henrietta and Mary for tracking down Hackney Homes man in charge, achieved for good price.
- Queensbridge Road - huge improvement - new arrivals. Water butts and water collecting organised, good news after long difficulties.
- Aden Terrace - pollarding done in spring.
- Compost news:- 14 tonnes delivered to Leaside free from London Waste in Edmonton. However access an issue on some other sites
- Delivery to Clissold Park in May of compost from Hackney Council – end product of all our brown bins and bags.
- Leaf mould was available in Springfield Park via park manager.

Aims for the coming year:

- Possibility of more raised beds at Overbury Street.
- Fencing: two repairs outstanding at Aden Terrace and Spring Lane. Delay may have been caused by turnover of our contact at the Council – we now have a new contact. This is Susan Ellis, newly arrived, and we look forward to working with her.
- This last year we were unable to host an Open Day but hope that it will prove possible next year.

Waiting List:

Waiting list frozen for the moment - to be discussed again by the Committee after current spell of renewals. Currently almost 300 on waiting list, becoming unmanageable. There were 17 plots re-let; 18 Neglected Plot Letters (NPL), 5 Notice to Quit letters, over the last year. Of course not all NPLs lead to re-lets, they often lead to medium or major improvement.

- We hope to encourage those disappointed to lobby for more sites.
- The top 25 numbers waiting list numbers are on website and not necessarily consecutive as

some people drop out, move away, don't renew or find other interests or commitments.

Expansion opportunities:

- Springhill might remove large shed to provide space for 2 plots.
- One O'Clock Club – consultation results showed 30% in favour of turning it into allotments, 33% in favour of nature reserve – we wait for news.
- Dalston site mentioned last year came to nothing - negative attitude from Hackney Homes would have made Society's presence untenable. It was also very shaded with many trees and there were safety issues.

As we suggest each year, let the committee know if you discover a potentially useful site. Remember that the state of the land is important – soil not concrete – for likely council support. Access, safety also to be considered.

Lastly:

Plea to anyone with travel plans – we have had two or three occurrences in the last couple of years of members deciding to go abroad for a spell. One was given “leave of absence” on the grounds of apparently planning good support, clear return date, good reason for absence (pregnancy) and good standing as a plot holder. However the friends let the member down, the absence continued longer than promised, and it all went pear shaped. We regret now allowing the leniency as the plot was wasted for a year. Contrast this with another member leaving London, who gave up their plot in a good shape, went to the top of the waiting list, and on their return was able after a short wait to get a new plot. No waste, no hassle. We ought to consider whether we can be a little flexible when members in good standing have a short term travel possibility; I would suggest that arranging for friends to tend over a short period of say 6 weeks may be acceptable as long as they do tend - longer than that, better to relinquish the pot and go to the top of waiting list. The Committee might want to think of a bye-law or guideline over the coming year. As always, keep an eye on saplings and paths. Some members express surprise at receiving a NPL. If you are struggling or ill tell your site rep.

As you know I am standing down as chair after four years and some earlier years doing the minutes. If and when I retire from my full time job I will be happy to offer my services if there are vacancies, but don't know when that will be. Having an allotment is a wonderful privilege but that privilege will only continue if the Society does, and I urge you to support the committee in any way you can. Please remember none of the officers are paid employees, they like to get out too and do a bit of digging between emails. My leaving may be a minor irritation – but I can tell you this, if you lose the current Secretary, without more support in place before that terrible day, then you really will notice the difference.

Treasurer's Report

Jackie Breakwell presented the statement of accounts and reported that income had exceeded expenditure. However, rent and rates had increased since last year as had site expenses with the improvements to Spring Hill and the high cost of rubbish removal.

Election of Officers and Committee Members

David Shenton was elected as **Chairperson**.

Sue Carling was re-elected as **Secretary**.

Jackie Breakwell was re-elected as **Treasurer**

Amanda Scope was re-elected as **Newsletter** editor

Maggie Henton and Bob Geater were re-elected as **auditors**.

Henrietta Soames was elected as **Vice-Chair**

June Lancaster was elected as **Vice-Secretary**

Site Representatives

Aden Terrace: Martin Klurowicz was re-elected.

Church Walk: June Lancaster was re-elected.

Leaside Road: Guy Dehn and Neil Irons were elected as joint representatives.

Overbury Street: Stephen Palmer was re-elected. Andrea Montgomery was elected as joint representative.

Queensbridge Road: Lorraine Cooper from the waiting list was elected.

Spring Hill: Eugene Clerkin, Jessica Datta and Phillip Pearson were re-elected.

Spring Lane: Gavin Everall was re-elected.

St Kilda's Road: Henrietta Soames was elected.

Springdale Road: Annie Wilson was re-elected.

Other committee members

Joss Bany was re-elected, Mary Connolly is standing down.

Plot Awards

Plot inspections were held in July; criteria for the awards were variety of produce, creativity, productivity, most improvement.

Leaside Road: best plot 1 – Mr Saha

Spring Lane: best plot 14 - Tom Byrne

Springhill: best plot 37 – Emel Yuksel

E5/E8 small sites: best plot 6 – Jane Christie at Overbury Street

Aden Terrace: best plot 14 – Bronwen Lloyd Jones

N16 Small sites: best plot 5 – Deborah and Martin Jefferies at Church Walk

Special mention to:

Best new plot – Joe Chown, plot 1 Queensbridge Road

Most improved plot – Anna Harding, plot 2 Overbury Street

Raised bed – Shane Cashin, plot 5 St Kilda's Road

Special mention from the Chair – if committee members had been included in the judging there is no doubt that an award would have gone to Henrietta Soames at St Kilda's, for best plot, best new plot and most improved plot! It is exquisite.

Any Other Business

Arising from Chair's report

Jessica Datta confirmed that there is contact with the Council about the possible extension of the boundary and re-use of the fence at Spring Hill to provide extra plots.

There was a discussion regarding the use of derelict land and recycled ballast containers to provide allotment plots. It was agreed that Penny Miller be co-opted to lead on new site development.

Henrietta Soames confirmed the existence of a large mound of good quality compost in the Council bay near the Clissold House cafe.

The key to the mews gate at Queensbridge is held by Gavin Everall.

Skip Provision

Members requiring a skip for large-scale clearance should contact their site representative in the first instance and, if approved, help obtain quotes and liaise with other plot holders regarding siting and sharing the skip.

Society Finance

Following a query regarding the size of the Society's cash balance, the Treasurer explained that the money was mainly held in anticipation of major improvement works at new sites and the maintenance of existing sites particularly expensive tree works. Any suggestions for expenditure should be addressed to the committee.

The meeting closed at about 9pm.