

Meeting: Abkhazi Advisory Board

Date: Friday, November 20, 2020

Time: 11am

Location: Zoom Meeting

Minutes

Present: Cathy Armstrong, Barb Gunn, Cherie Miltimore, Jacqui Paulson, Lesley Wood

Regrets: Pam Madoff (zoom difficulties)

1. Adoption of Minutes

Approval of the Abkhazi Advisory Board minutes of October 16, 2020 was motioned by Jacqui seconded by Lesley and carried by all present.

2. Agenda

Cathy's Report (TLC Executive Director)

Cherie's Report (Abkhazi Garden Site Manager)

Jacqui's Report (Abkhazi Garden Head Gardener)

Lesley's Report (President of Friends of Abkhazi Garden Society)

Barb's Report (Owner/Operator of Teahouse at Abkhazi Garden)

3. Cathy's Report (TLC Executive Director)

Abkhazi Revenues and Expenses 11/01/2019 to 10/31/2020 –Cathy reviewed the Abkhazi revenues and expenses for the past year which does not include overhead costs. It was noted that the Square brought in a lot of donations this year. However, gate donations are down by \$10,000 due to the COVID 19 garden closure in the Spring. City taxes are almost exempt which keeps our expenses down. It was also noted that water expenses seemed lower than past years and that tree trimming was costly this year. Bottom line, the TLC puts money into the garden. Revenues minus expenses for this past year is -17,988.59. TLC is subsidizing the garden by almost \$18,000 this year. Cathy would like to build up gate donations, the endowment fund and fundraise to become revenue neutral.

Christopher Ball (former head gardener and owner) – Cathy have been in touch with Chris regarding slides that Nico had given him. Christopher mentioned that he had many items that the TLC may be interested in and he would love to meet at the garden. Chris will be coming to the garden to meet with Cathy, Cherie and Jacqui on Monday, November 23 sat 11:30am.

4. Cherie's Report (Abkhazi Garden Site Manager)

Heritage BC Awards – An Abkhazi Garden volunteer team award nomination has been submitted to Heritage BC.

Holiday Sales at the Gate – We have volunteers at the gate on weekends that will sell holiday wreaths, festive planters, swags, table toppers and seeds as stocking stuffers. These items and other plant sales will now go through the square and tax will be added. We will not sell season passes as this conflicts with donations at the gate that are not taxable. Helen Chesnut will write about our Holiday Weekend Sales and the Teahouse and Gift Shop in her column on Saturday November 28th.

Garden Days Open – The Garden is now closed on Mondays and Tuesdays in sync with the Teahouse and we will be closing at 4pm in sync with the Teahouse.

Friendship With a Prince – Don Shea was hired by the Prince and Princess Abkhazi when he was a student at Victoria College. This led to a friendship with the Prince for over 25 years. Don has a few stories to share that Cherie will write about in the newsletter. ie When Don was going to Europe, Nico asked him to go to a café on the left bank in Paris and sit at a table that Nico sat at with Jean Paul Sartre.

Driftwood Sculptures – Cherie has been in touch with driftwood sculpture artist, Tanya Bub who recently created Takaya (wolf) for Cheryl Alexander. Takaya is visiting different places around Victoria. Takaya started at the Empress Hotel and is now at the Shaw Centre for the Salish Sea and Cherie will see if we can bring Takaya to Abkhazi Garden. In the meantime, in recognition of TLC's protection of Wildlife Corridors, Tanya has offered to lend us a cougar for display at the garden if we varnish this sculpture. Board members agreed to displaying the cougar in the garden. Cherie will follow up.

5. Jacqui's Report (Abkhazi Garden Head Gardener)

Holiday Wreaths and More – Jacqui has been organizing the production of holiday wreaths, festive planters, swags and table toppers for sale at the gate on the weekends. Volunteers have brought many items in to help create these holiday decorations. Sue Hara is putting together festive planters and Janet Pretty is helping with the wreaths.

Winterizing the garden – clean-up of the garden continues. Jacqui is impressed with our volunteers who work hard and come out in miserable weather.

Irrigation – the water has been shut off. The blow out of the system was done at the beginning of this week. Jacqui brought up in a couple of rain barrels in addition to one by the green house. Jim has hooked them up so Jacqui can use water from the rain barrels as needed in the future.

Jacqui believes the cost of water this past year is lower for a few reasons – the weather was not as dry, the lawns are now a mix of micro clover and grass and needs less water and the irrigation was adjusted to distribute water more efficiently.

Water costs have been as high as \$12,000 in the past. Total water bill for Abkhazi Nov 2018 to Nov 2019 was \$8,734.79. Cathy will investigate the cost of water for the last five years.

Propagation – Jacqui is overseeing the propagation of plants for next year. She reported that we have many free tree saplings from Barletts which includes Katsura trees and white pine trees.

Snow – Jacqui will purchase bags of snow melt that is environmentally friendly to use when clearing the boulevard sidewalk and driveway. Barb has snow shovels and will help with the driveway task.

5. Lesley's Report (President of Friends of Abkhazi Garden Society)

Garden Visit – dropped in the garden on Monday and remarked how spectacular the garden is looking with the winter clean up.

Abkhazi Rhododendrons – Friends planned to bring in three rhodos named after the Abkhazis: Prince Abkhazi, Princess Abkhazi and Peggy Abkhazi. Jim T brought in the Prince and Princess. The Prince is planted on the left hand side as you approach the South Lawn. Jacqui is planning to plant the Princess in the same area. She would like to have a pathway by these rhodos to the Iona Campagnolo rhodo which visitors often miss seeing. Jacqui will get a cutting of the Peggy Rhodo in the spring.

Abkhazi Tray – the Victoria Rhododendron Society presents the Abkhazi Tray annually to a member who has made an outstanding contribution to the society. It was not given out in 2020 due to the pandemic. This silver tray was given to Peggy's parents when they got married and has survived the first and second world war. The Prince and Princess Nicolas Abkhazi trophy was presented to VRS by Peggy on March 20, 1986.

6. Barb's Report (Owner/operator of The Teahouse at Abkhazi Garden)

Successful Summer – despite COVID, the Teahouse did well this summer.

Gratitude – to Cathy and Connie of The Land Conservancy for applying for the federal commercial grant subsidy program. To Cherie for her “can do” attitude and publicity of the garden. To cheerful Jacqui for working hard and making the garden look better than ever. To the volunteers who love the garden and work hard in the dirt and rain, to help create a beautiful venue for the Teahouse to operate in.

Teahouse Hours and New Server – open for regular winter hours, Wednesday through Sunday 11am-4pm. Josh is a new server hired for two days a week.

Christmas Season – Starting November 27th, the Teahouse will be serving a Festive Christmas High Tea. Ads are going out in Eat and Monday Magazine.

Next Meeting: No meeting in Dec. Next meeting will be Friday, Jan 22 at 11am by zoom.

Adjournment at 11:55am