

**Meeting:** Abkhazi Advisory Board

**Date:** Friday, November 18, 2022

**Time:** 11am

**Location:** Zoom Meeting

## **Minutes**

**Present:** Cathy Armstrong, Samantha Beare, Barb Gunn, Pam Madoff, Cherie Miltimore, Jacqui Paulson, Lesley Wood

**Regrets:** None

### **1. Adoption of Minutes**

Approval of the Abkhazi Advisory Board minutes of August 19, 2022, was motioned by Jacqui, seconded by Samantha.

### **2. Agenda**

**Cherie's Report** (Site Manager)

**Jacqui's Report** (Head Gardener)

**Barb's Report** (Owner/Operator of the Teahouse)

**Lesley's Report** (Friends Group)

**Cathy's Report** (TLC Executive Director)

### **3. Cherie's Report** (Abkhazi Garden Site Manager)

**Abkhazi Garden Art Show Fundraiser** – 12 artworks were sold and we raised almost \$2000. Many thanks to Barb for show casing the art in the Teahouse and helping with sales.

**Abkhazi Garden Documentary** – TLC in partnership with Royal Roads University held a premiere of Abkhazi Garden – Sanctuary from War at the Parkside Hotel on Wednesday November 9<sup>th</sup>. The new Georgian ambassador to Canada, Kakha Imnadze was in attendance. CHEK TV aired the film on Remembrance Day at 5:30pm. Over 26,000 people viewed the film which is the equivalent to filling the Save-On-Foods Memorial four times. The ambassador is in discussions with the director of the film, Geoff Bird about showing this film on TV in Georgia. Either TLC or RRU will enter this documentary in some film festivals. When the film festivals are over, the film will be available to see on the TLC website.

**Ambassador Visit** – Kakha Imnadze came to visit the garden the day after the premiere. Cherie and Jacqui gave him a tour of the garden. He enjoyed Royal Abkhazi high tea in the teahouse. (Thank you Barb) The ambassador may be back in December when a Georgian contingent comes to visit the garden. Jacqui hopes we can have a twinning of a garden in Georgia in the future.

**Atkinson Family Visit** – Steve Atkinson came to the garden with his brother Alan and his Aunt Helen with stories, photos and digital photos of the work the Atkinson family did in the garden. Peris Atkinson, was Steve and Alan’s uncle. Peris was awarded the contract to do the rock work in the garden. Peris worked with two uncles and two brothers over 3 years to build the walls, staircases and pathways. They also did rock sidings on the buildings and helped plant plants in the garden.

**LA 1949** – We can now confirm that the initials on the top path in the garden stand for Laverne Atkinson who was a brother of Peris Atkinson. We got a picture of Laverne’s wife, Helen Atkinson beside the initials.

**Fallen Tree** – a giant Garry Oak by the front gate fell over taking out the fence between the gate and kiosque and downed power lines leaving theTeahouse without power on Oct 27<sup>th</sup>. The Victoria Fire Department, BC Hydro, Telus and city crews all worked through the night attend to the damage. The garden was still a mess the next day but Jacqui came to the rescue. (more in Jacqui’s report)

**Insurance Claim for Damages** – finding out costs for repairs of structures in the garden: electrical, irrigation, fence, kiosque and gate due to the fallen tree.

**Fire Department Lock Box** – would like to get a lock box so when the Victoria Fire Department arrives it has access to a key for the gate and a key for the house and shed. Cost is around \$900. Waiting to see if Fire Department approves location for the key that Prices Locks is recommending.

**Summerhouse Roof** – is leaking and we have contracted Proline Roofing to replace the roof. Proline will probably come in January. They did a good job of the roof on the tool/freezer shed in 2018.

**Walkway/Driveway** – still calling in contractors to sort out cost and design of the walkway/driveway. We would like it to be wheelchair friendly, permeable and incorporate garbage screening and bike racks. We will review the pathways as well to make the garden more accessible and hope to apply for a grant for this major project. We will call in a geotechnic company to find out how much rock we are dealing with as we want to change the grade of the driveway and make it permeable if possible.

**Wheelchair and Walker Accessibility** – right now we have wheelchair accessibility up the driveway to the Teahouse patio. This leads our guests into an outdoor restaurant in the good weather. For guests who just want to experience the garden, I have shown the path without stairs to the Summerhouse on our handout map and let them know the path is bumpy along the way.

**Volunteer Festive Party** – volunteers will be invited to the Abkhazi Garden Holiday party on Tuesday, December 20<sup>th</sup>. There will be a sitting at 11am and 12pm. There will be seasonal favourites, tourtiere (Thank you Barb) and hot apple cider. Jacqui and I will be serving.

#### **4. Jacqui's Report (Head Gardener)**

**Fallen Tree** – Jacqui called in Bartlett Trees to clean up mess of the fallen tree. They also cleared the neighbour's yard. She also called in a city arborist to assess the tree next to the fallen tree. An emergency order was given to take down the second tree. Bartlett Trees took down the second tree and took the sail out of a third tree on a second visit. Bartlett has recommended doing an assessment of all the trees at a cost of \$9000 and TLC has approved this cost.

**Tree Assessments** – All the Garry Oaks will be assessed as well as the original plum and cherry tree. There is an "ultrasound" being done on trees to let of know of rot and root damage. Bartlett believes Armillaria fungus is to blame for the fallen tree. Bartlett Trees are retagging the trees as some of the labels can no longer be read.

**Tree Replacements** – Jacqui is considering replacing the trees with Acer Rubrum (maple trees) as they grow fast and can handle water. We have to water the rhododendrons but the Garry Oaks do not want a lot of water.

**Firewood Fundraiser** – rented a wood splitter and had volunteers cut up the Garry Oak chunks of wood. Will sell by the wheelbarrow. Put on Abkhazi Garden social media and Facebook Marketplace. Jacqui really appreciated how hard the volunteers worked.

**Irrigation** – Victoria Garden Sprinklers was in to winterize the irrigation. They noted no damage was done to the system by the fallen tree as there was no breakage. Just a new piece needs to be put in as the line was uprooted by the fallen tree. The sprinkler technician is concerned about the perimeter not draining in the southwest corner of the garden and has plans to fix this.

**Bulk Mulch** – ordered some mulch to spread throughout the garden to protect plants especially in the north part of the garden where the soil is thin. Job for Monday volunteers.

**Festive Season Sales** – runs from Sat Nov 26 to Sat Dec 24. New items this year are the Teacup Bird Feeders and Wreath Bird Feeders. Jacqui will be holding a workshop with volunteers next Wednesday and Thursday to create wreaths for the sale. Culinary (Edible Wreaths) will come out closer to Christmas. Cherie has organized volunteers to sell our festive décor on the weekends. If no volunteer is on site, Barb will take the money at the Teahouse for us.

**No Volunteers in January** – Jacqui will not be having garden volunteers in January. The last day of volunteering will be the day of the Holiday Party for volunteers on December 20<sup>th</sup>. Volunteer will be back on Monday Feb 6 and Tuesday Feb 7<sup>th</sup>.

## **5. Barb's Report** (Owner/operator of the Teahouse)

**Festive Christmas High Tea** – starts on Sat Nov 26<sup>th</sup> until Sat Dec 31.

**January Closure** – The Teahouse will be closed from Jan 1 to Jan 17. It will reopen on Wednesday January 18<sup>th</sup>.

**Bees** – the beehives did not do well this season. The first hive died quite quickly and the second hive has died. Kate Fraser of Please Bees does not believe it was a wasp problem. Will consider changing the hives location.

**Wasps** – were a huge problem this year. Jacqui and Barb will work together to solve the wasp problem.

**Good Summer** – the Teahouse did well this summer. 82 cruise ships came. There could be up to 174 next year. Cruise ship visitors come at 9am or after 4:30pm and do not interfere with regular visitors.

## **6. Lesley's Report** (Friends Group)

**Nothing to Report**

## **3. Cathy's Report** (TLC Executive Director)

**Abkhazi Financials** – Cathy reviewed the financials from October 1, 2021 to September 30, 2022. The big news is TLC is not subsidizing the garden this year. We are \$67,039.35 in the black this year. This includes a \$40,000 bequest from the Joan Alston Stewart estate. Gate revenue was up this year as well as our fundraising from plant sales, festive sales and art sales.

**Adjournment:** Meeting adjourned at 12:15 pm.

**Next Meeting:** will be Friday, January 20, 2022 at 11am by zoom.