

Meeting: Abkhazi Advisory Board

Date: Thursday, November 16, 2023

Time: 11am

Location: Zoom Meeting

Minutes

Present: Penny Crawford, Pam Madoff, Cherie Miltimore, Jacqui Paulson, Dianna Stenberg, Lesley Wood

Regrets: Barb Gunn

1. Adoption of Minutes

Approval of the Abkhazi Advisory Board minutes of September 14, 2023 was motioned by Pam, seconded by Jacqui and passed unanimously after amendment to replace **Marg's** suggestions to improve bookmark to **Friend's Group** suggestions to improve bookmark.

2. Agenda

Jacqui's Report (Head Gardener)

Dianna's Report (TLC Executive Director)

Cherie's Report (Site Manager)

Lesley's Report (Friends of Abkhazi Garden Group)

3. Jacqui's Report (Head Gardener)

Fall Clean Up – still going on. Jacqui is taking some of the green waste away as there is too much to chip on site. She takes it to Island View Nursery who charges depending on the amount. Island View has also offered good discounts for plants sold at our Fall Plant Sale. Dianna would like to send them a Thank You note.

Hornbeam Hedge – Jacqui can trim the southside Hornbeam hedge and a section of the westside but would like to work out a better process with trimming the Hornbeam with the neighbours in the service area as this section is out of her reach.

Garry Oak Trees – Bartlett Tree Experts pruned the Garry Oak trees of the upper lawn area on November 15th. Bartlett will be back on Mon Nov 27 and Tue Nov 28 to remove #90 Garry Oak and prune Garry Oaks in the Rhododendron Woodland.

Wood from the Oaks – Some of the wood will go to members of the Island Woodturners Guild and some will be sold as firewood. Jacqui will rent a log splitter to chop up the wood and is asking garden volunteers to help.

Replacement Trees – With the City of Victoria’s approval. Jacqui will replace the Garry Oak in the Rhododendron Woodland with two Acer Rubrum (red maple) trees. Dianna gave approval for Jacqui to purchase the Acer Rubrums that Jacqui has put on hold for purchase.

Garry Oak Hanging over the Boulevard – the City of Victoria has decided that TLC is responsible for this Garry Oak if it falls over. It could fall over the power lines, parking and Fairfield Road and the Boulevard Garden.

Abkhazi Festive Season – Jacqui is preparing for the festive décor for the Teahouse and for our festive fundraiser. Jacqui will have holiday swags, festive planters, culinary wreaths and centre pieces for sale at the gate. New this year are bonsai kits, flower press kits and kid bird seed cake kits. An email was sent out to volunteers for materials needed to make the festive décor. Jacqui has a team of volunteers who will help her.

Irrigation – lines have been flushed and shut down for season. A lot more water was used this year because of the drought and Jacqui hopes to find ways to use less water next year.

Wifi Available in the Garden – Jacqui recommends that visitors in the garden have wifi access and she would like wifi access as well. Currently the Teahouse provides wifi in the Teahouse.

4. Diannas’s Report (TLC Executive Director)

Income and Expense Report – Dianna reviewed the revenue and expense report from October 1, 2022 to September 30, 2023. It was revealed that Abkhazi Garden has a deficit of \$14,269.67. We had some unexpected costs such as the Bartlett Tree Experts assessment of our Oak trees for \$9,550.00, increased utility bills of over \$8,000 and Aryze costs of \$7,152.60 that we will get back. Not all TLC expenses are listed in this report such as staff time and capital assets such as electrical upgrades.

Rezoning Update – waiting for the City of Victoria’s Committee of the Whole to approve the Aryze development on Fairfield Road. Approximately \$300,000 will be paid to TLC once the rezoning for Abkhazi happens. This money will go to the previous unsecured creditors.

Abkhazi Garden Logo – several logos were shared with AAB members. There were suggestions made to improve the logo. Dianna will take these suggestions back to Head Office where the logo is being designed.

Gaming Grant/Donations – we will hear if we get the gaming grant for the walkway/driveway in December. Dianna would like to put out an appeal to TLC members for donations for this project. Cherie suggested putting a sign up at the gate to show where donations go to support the garden and appeal for money for specific projects. Jacqui recommended installing a QR board at the gate to take donations such as the Salvation Army uses. This way visitors can donate by card to the garden when volunteers are not present. Dianna will look into getting a QR donation board.

Abkhazi Bookmark – Dianna sent out a couple of drafts for the bookmark. Cherie has not sent in feedback yet. Dianna will send it out to all AAB members for review and feedback.

Liability Insurance – Penny is concerned that a contract worker is responsible for liability if a volunteer gardener gets hurt and she thinks TLC should carry the liability insurance for the volunteers. Dianna will check into this and get back to AAB to clarify our insurance coverage.

AAB Insurance – Dianna will find out if AAB needs board insurance or if we should change the name from board to committee as we do not operate as a board.

Accessibility – Dianna asked about accessibility improvements to the garden. Jacqui and Cherie filled her in about benches, pathways, handrails and walkway improvements. Making the Garden more accessible is ongoing.

West Coast Seeds Fundraiser – TLC will be running a fundraising campaign by selling West Coast Seeds. TLC will receive 40% of the profits. Dianna would like us to share this fundraising campaign with our volunteers and supporters and put a sign up in our message board at the front gate.

5. Cherie's Report (Site Manager)

Fundraising – Cherie would like to keep track of our yearly fundraising efforts. We raise money from the Spring Plant Sale, Fall Plant Sale, Festive Market, Art Show, Wooden Bowl Sales, Yoga and Tours.

Parking – Cherie is arranging to meet with City of Victoria, Councilor, Matt Dell about parking and pedestrian concerns. Matt has a busy schedule and finding a time to meet is challenging.

International Peace Day – The Georgian Embassy Charge D'Affaire, George Meskheli, attended with the ambassador assistant, Kate Fraser on Sep 21. A new ambassador will be appointed in the next few months and the Georgian embassy staff hope to introduce the new ambassador to Abkhazi Garden around May 26th which is Georgia Independence Day.

Insurance for Fallen Oak – We are going to make claims on our expenses from the fall of the Garry Oak in October in 2022. These expenses include gate, fence, kiosk, electrical and irrigation repair.

Maintenance in Fall – we have completed the following projects: Moss removal on the Teahouse, changing Fluorescent lights to LED in the Teahouse and painting concrete around the Teahouse. The metal railings by the lower pond will be installed after the Oak Trees are pruned and the Oak Tree is removed.

International Garden Tourism Conference – Cherie attended this conference from November 1-4 in Victoria. She made good connections with representatives from local gardens, gardens of Canada and International Gardens.

Photography Contest – Cherie would like to have a Winter, Spring, Summer and Fall contest. The prize would be an Afternoon Tea for Two per season. Thank you Barb. This would give us updated pictures of the garden, four seasonal pics could go into the Summerhouse to show the beauty of the garden and we would have pictures for a calendar fundraiser and stock photos.

Documentary – The ‘Abkhazi Garden – Sanctuary from War’ documentary was shown on CHEK TV on Remembrance Day, November 11th.

Abkhazi Garden Featured in Tourism Book – The book, 111 PLACES IN VICTORIA THAT YOU MUST NOT MISS’ by Dave Doroghy and Graeme Menzies is now published. Abkhazi Garden is featured second in this book. This book will appeal to locals and experienced travelers.

Abkhazi Garden Festive Market – the market will be open on weekends from Saturday December 2 until Sunday December 24th from 11am to 3:30pm. Cherie will advertise with local media, social media, posters in community and Facebook Marketplace. Abkhazi volunteers will help with the sales. We will sell wooden bowls, firewood and festive décor (list under Jacqui’s report)

Teahouse Festive Tea – The Teahouse will be open for Festive Tea from Saturday, November 25th to Sunday, January 7th this season. The Teahouse and Garden will be closed on Christmas Day and New Year’s Day and from Monday, January 8 to Tuesday, January 16th.

Volunteer New Year Luncheon – Last year our Volunteer Holiday Party became our New Year Luncheon and we will host a New Year Luncheon again this year on Tuesday, January 23rd in the Teahouse. Thank you Barb for the use of the Teahouse and the promise of 6 meat pies.

6. Lesley’s Report (Friends of Abkhazi Garden Group)

No report given.

Adjournment: Meeting adjourned at 12:35 pm.

Next Meeting: will be Thursday, January 18,2024 at 11am by zoom.