

ONE TREE HILL ALLOTMENT SOCIETY

Minutes of the Annual General Meeting 2021

Held at Blyth Hill Tavern (Thursday 23 September 2021). Some attended through a Zoom facility provided by Natasha.

31 members in attendance.

Apologies – Alice Baker

Introductions

The current Committee members introduced themselves to the meeting

Minutes of AGM 2019 Agreed

It was noted that there was no AGM in 2020 because of Covid19 related restrictions.

Matters Arising - None

Chair's Report

Martin introduced the meeting and reminded the meeting of the increasing focus in society of growing your own produce.

Treasurer's Report

The Society's accounts for 2020/21 had not been completed and audited or circulated ahead of the meeting.

There was some discussion as to whether the accounts for 2019/20 had been audited and signed off – given that there was no AGM it was felt that these should also be circulated or recirculated for information.

Action: It was agreed that the 2020/21 accounts must be completed, audited and circulated asap and presented for approval to the Society at an EGM. The EGM could be held on Zoom. Alice to lead.

Membership Report

93 applicants on waiting list. Over 150 new applications for plots had been received. Not all applicants are being added to the waiting list until the current list is reduced. Eight half plots had been let during 2020/21.

A question was raised as to whether the Society still operated a policy that favoured Southwark residents. It was confirmed that the ratio of lettings is 3:1 Southwark/Lewisham with the intent of rebalancing the overall ratio.

Communal Work

Dee presented an update. She had received 58 submissions from 35 ploholders. Whilst we know that some ploholders do carry out work, often on their own rather than on the communal work days, and do not report, it is unlikely that all ploholders are carrying out the required six hours a year of communal work. Given the size of the site and the potential new projects (see below) it is important that we all contribute, including maintaining the paths in the area around your plot (this is not communal work). More monitoring of ploholder contribution to communal work will be carried out in the coming year. Those plot holders who clearly do not contribute sufficient hours may be issued with a notice to quit.

Dee asked those present for ideas to make communal work more appealing. Some discussion and points were made that:

- There may not always be sufficient equipment for some of the tasks – committee to consider what additional equipment might be useful
- It isn't always clear what work is needed – Committee need to circulate up to date list each month and post on noticeboards.
- Not everyone has a map of the site so do not know where to work if using a list from the noticeboard (nb an updated map is attached to these minutes).

(a suggestion was made under AOB that we consider inviting those on the waiting list to join for communal work days and/or to help out plot holders)

Tree Partnership

Jon Johnson updated the meeting. As background members were reminded that as part of the lease with Southwark Council the Society has responsibility for maintaining all the trees on the site (and was given some monies for this). Whilst the membership can manage some of the ongoing maintenance of the smaller trees it was recognised in early 2020 that the Society should enter into a partnership with a professional tree surgeon to ensure that larger trees are managed, acknowledged as an expensive task. As at September 2021 two surgeons have responded to an invitation to form a five year partnership. The prospective costs and details are being collated and should be completed in early October. Included in the tree management is a proposal/suggestion to reduce the height of the various poplar trees around the site.

Budget 2021/22 and Rents

The budget was not presented. There was some discussion about the rise in rents and a request for more rationale. The likely cost of the tree partnership together with the requirement to maintain boundary fences and to have some contingency funds has driven the decision by the Committee to increase the rents.

A question was asked as to whether there would be future rent rises. The Committee cannot guarantee that there will be no future rent rises but the point was made that OTHAS rents are still lower than many/most other London allotment sites.

Increasing Plot numbers

Martin outlined an idea to increase the number of plots by clearing some of the overgrown area between the path next to the Orchard extension and the Honor Oak Road boundary. The clearance will take some time as the area is covered by brambles. Both top growth and roots will need to be removed.

In addition to this area Ian White suggested that an area adjacent to the pizza and stage area be re-cleared and could be a plot.

An area for bonfires to dispose of wood and brambles etc, and ideally for social events, is proposed to the south of the path up the hill opposite plots 50 and 70. This will also need to be cleared to a reasonable standard.

All of these projects are identified as targeted communal work day projects.

Open Day

Simon gave feedback about the recent Open Day and Art Trail. This had been seen as a success both as a social event and financially. A net surplus of around £400 was made for the OTHAS Social Fund. Thanks were given to those involved, specifically Shiree for the Art Trail, Jamie for the music, Jill, Sophie and Alice for the tea and cake stall and Ozzie for the barbecue.

A suggestion was made that for the next event that some “greeters” could staff the entrances to ensure that visitors are made aware of what is on , where to go etc.

Elections

Chris Williams, Martin Smith, Christian Denereaz, Dee Malcolm, Andrew Coulson, Simon Miles and Alice Baker were elected to the Committee. The Committee will meet and allocate roles (meeting scheduled for 2 October).

One vacancy is to be advertised to the whole membership.

Jane asked for more information about the Committee time requirement and the different roles.

Jon Johnson and Andy Bradshaw were re-confirmed as Trustees.

The appointment of Auditors was discussed and the Committee needs to clarify who is auditing the accounts for 2020/21.

Any Other Business

Nature area: Jon Johnson outlined a proposal to create a wildlife/nature area (see attached proposal). This was agreed. At the moment Jon believes this area can be created using resources/plot holders from the plots adjacent to the area. Jon informed the meeting that the South London Botanical Institute will be visiting the site in early October.

Buddy/mentor scheme: question raised as to whether we could have a buddy or mentor scheme to support new plot holders or those struggling to maintain their plots. Meeting was reminded that there is an Associate Member scheme (rarely used) under which plot holders can bring in others to support them. The Committee will consider how a buddy/mentor scheme could work.

History survey. A suggestion was made to consider carrying out a survey of the site to look for historical/archaeological items. It was suggested that we could have some form of history event that includes information about the history of the site and the showing of found footage and a C4 programme snippet.

AFRIL Helen updated the meeting about the project and thanked the Society and its members for welcoming the refugee community. She reminded us that the AFRIL shelter is available for social events etc.

Thanks were recorded to the outgoing Committee members: Carole Backler, Sara Nunnington and previous Chair, Jon Johnson.

The meeting concluded at 21.30.

Attachments – for final version:

- Updated Map
- Wildlife/Nature area proposal