

DAVIE AGRICULTURAL ADVISORY BOARD
AUGUST 6, 2012

1. ROLL CALL

The meeting was called to order at 6:30 p.m. Board members present were: Chair Dave Parrish, Vice-Chair Scott Weinstein, Jason Hurley and Sam Scott. Also present was Secretary Janet Gale recording the meeting. Julie Aitken was absent.

2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES: August 6, 2012

Dr. Scott noted the following changes: Page 2, paragraph 5, “Nova Southeastern University” should be changed to the University of Florida. Page 3, paragraph 3, “...a freeze in effect on January 1st” should be changed to ...prior to January 1st of any given year for the last five years.

Dr. Scott explained that freezes may occur in November and December, and if an individual walked the fields on January 1st, they were likely to see fields that appeared brown and uncultivated. Chair Parrish clarified that there were three cold conditions recognized in South Florida: a chilling factor, a frost, and a hard freeze. In some winters, all three events have been known to occur.

Vice-Chair Weinstein made a motion, seconded by Mr. Hurley, to approve the minutes of August 6, 2012 as amended. In a voice vote, with Ms. Aitken being absent, all voted in favor. **(Motion carried 4-0)**

3. OLD BUSINESS

3.1 Follow up on Van Kirk Property Tax Implications

Vice-Chair Weinstein observed that this negotiation process appeared to be ongoing; he was not aware of whether or not the request for a nonprofit exemption had been granted or denied. Vice-Chair Weinstein recalled that Intergovernmental Affairs Manager Phillip Holste, who had attended the July 9th Board meeting, had stated that he was trying to help the North-South Institute receive a favorable decision on this exemption, similar to the exemption granted to Batten’s Farm. He concluded, however, that there was nothing current to discuss on this item.

Mr. Hurley asked Ms. Gale to find out whether the request for a nonprofit exemption had been approved or denied by the Tax Appraiser’s Office. Ms. Gale agreed to follow up with Mr. Holste on this issue. It was agreed that this would be an Agenda Item at the Board’s September meeting.

3.2 Follow up Community Gardens

Chair Parrish noted that the Town had passed a Resolution to adopt guidelines for the creation of community gardens in Town parks. Vice-Chair Weinstein commented that he was glad to see that the Town Council had recognized the program.

Mr. Hurley asked for an update on the planting of fruit trees in Berman Park as part of this program. Vice-Chair Weinstein said there had been no further discussion of this issue at present. He recalled that while the Town’s previous Parks and Recreation Director had been in favor of this program, the Resolution stated that the pilot community garden program would begin at Robbins Lodge Open Space Park, with no further locations at present.

Vice-Chair Weinstein added that the Town Council appeared to want to ensure the pilot project at Robbins Lodge Open Space Park was a success before extending it to other Town parks. He noted, however, that members of the community who had wished to establish community gardens at other locations may be disappointed that they were unable to do so at present. He suggested that these individuals might wish to become involved with the pilot program at Robbins Lodge.

Chair Parrish stated that one reason these community members had wished to begin a community garden at Berman Park was because it was within walking distance for them. He noted that the Urban Farming Initiative Task Force had met for nearly a year to discuss the establishment of community gardens in 15 locations throughout the Town; after the Task Force had made their recommendations, Parks and Recreation had reached out to the public to determine the level of interest.

**DAVIE AGRICULTURAL ADVISORY BOARD
AUGUST 6, 2012**

Dr. Scott recalled that there had been multiple inquiries about the proposed program before the first public meeting was held; however, it appeared that invitations to this meeting had not been sent to all interested individuals at this time. At the second public meeting, only residents from the Berman Park area were in attendance. Chair Parrish pointed out that before the second meeting, there had been discussion of whether to plant vegetable gardens or canopy fruit trees. At the time, Parks and Recreation staff had been in favor of allowing canopy fruit trees, although the Town Council had not granted this approval.

Dr. Scott commented that an urban farm/community garden was underway on Orange Drive, with a waiting list of seven individuals who were interested in participating. He stated that the program would begin on August 28, with the assistance of a Transforming Our Communities' Health (TOUCH) grant from the Centers for Disease Control (CDC). He recognized Vice-Chair Weinstein's contribution in getting this project underway.

Vice-Chair Weinstein asked if the North-South Institute's project at Batten's Farm would also have a community gardening component. Dr. Scott confirmed this, stating that crops have been selected and space has been established; the Institute was currently awaiting the donation of soil and equipment for raised beds. The three selected row crops were strawberries, tomatoes, and cucumbers. This program would involve the participation of schoolchildren from the community, from the soil preparation stage through harvest. He noted that this was a separate project from the urban farming component.

Vice-Chair Weinstein asked if the Board members were familiar with the area where the community garden would be established at Robbins Lodge Open Space Park. He explained that he had met with Parks and Recreation Director David Flaherty and Matt Mlodzinski of Special Events, and had learned that the community garden would be located near the entrance of the park, where a trailer for staff was currently located. He added that if a staff member no longer lived on the premises, the individual in charge of the community gardening effort could use the trailer.

Mr. Hurley recalled that a caretaker had traditionally occupied a cabin at this location, although it had burned down. He remarked that having a caretaker reside at the park had been a good idea in the past, and noted that Public Works or Parks and Recreation might wish to appoint a caretaker at this location when the project was underway.

4. NEW BUSINESS

4.1 Discuss Resolution Regarding Community Gardens Guidelines, R-2012-171

Dr. Scott pointed out a stipulation in the guidelines for community gardens which stated that the garden would be organic. He advised that this would be very restrictive, as the pests and diseases in this small area could become burdensome. Vice-Chair Weinstein observed that the intent was for the community garden to be organic "as much as possible." Dr. Scott continued that it would be best for the individual overseeing the project to inform community gardeners that they may use light crop covers, as pests could cause significant damage otherwise. It was also noted that organic fertilizers and pesticides could be very expensive, and may not be as effective in Florida's ecological zone.

Chair Parrish commented that requiring staff's approval of any fertilizer, pesticide, or fungicide not on the approved list was a good step, as there was a great deal of evidence that inorganic materials do no damage if correctly applied to crops in South Florida. Vice-Chair Weinstein offered to discuss this issue further with Parks and Recreation Director David Flaherty. He added that additional pests come into Florida through ports each month, although he noted that many of these were not damaging. He recalled previous pests which had come into the country, some of which may be easily controlled and some of which present a more significant challenge.

4.2 Re-establish Contact with Residents Who Were Interested in the Robbins Park Pilot Program

**DAVIE AGRICULTURAL ADVISORY BOARD
AUGUST 6, 2012**

Chair Parrish suggested that Vice-Chair Weinstein reach out to some of the Town residents who had expressed interest in community gardening. Vice-Chair Weinstein said he would follow up with Parks and Recreation Director Flaherty on this topic, as well as with regard to the organic gardening restrictions. He suggested that the residents be notified via email of the creation of the community gardening program at Robbins Lodge, as it had been approximately one year since the issue was first discussed.

Vice-Chair Weinstein added that he was not sure how involved the Agricultural Advisory Board would be with the community garden project in the future, although he advised that he would remain personally involved to ensure its progress. Chair Parrish noted that Parks and Recreation Staff, possibly with the help of its advisory board, would continue to oversee the project.

Mr. Hurley noted that the guidelines allowed community garden participants to use vegetables for their personal consumption, but did not allow the sale of crops at Batten's Farm or elsewhere. Vice-Chair Weinstein commented that this guideline had been something of a controversy, as one major reason for farming was the ability to sell what was harvested; however, growing crops for sale was prohibited on Town land.

Dr. Scott suggested that the community garden manager could compile a list of local food banks to which excess produce could be donated. Vice-Chair Weinstein asserted that the Town still needed a liaison for the community garden in order to organize workdays, coordinate gardeners, and assume other responsibilities. He noted that this would be a volunteer position, which could be held by a Parks and Recreation employee or a Town resident.

Chair Parrish suggested that the Emergency Assistance Service Effort (EASE) Foundation be considered as one of these local food banks, as they provide different forms of assistance to local residents, including a food pantry, and had a longtime presence in the community.

5. AGENDA ITEMS FOR NEXT MEETING

The Board members determined that the discussions of the Van Kirk property tax implications and the community garden project be placed on next month's Agenda. Mr. Hurley suggested that they also discuss the possibility of revising the community garden guidelines in order to allow community garden participants to sell their produce; however, Chair Parrish pointed out that the Town would not want to assume liability if the sale was allowed. Vice-Chair Weinstein agreed that the idea of selling produce could be discussed further to determine if there was a way for this to be done without incurring liability issues.

Dr. Scott asked if this meant the Town's liability trumped the freedom of residents to farm, pointing out that the onus should be on the farmer to ensure that his or her produce was safe for consumption. Mr. Hurley added that he did not believe liability issues would disappear if produce was donated.

Dr. Scott stated that a Food Policy Summit would be co-sponsored by the North-South Institute during the last week of September. Topics discussed would be the local production of food. He invited the Board members to participate in some of the meetings at this Summit, which would be held at the Farmer's Market. He offered to email the members when a date has been finalized.

6. COMMENTS AND/OR SUGGESTIONS

There were no comments and/or suggestions made.

7. ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business and no objections, the meeting was adjourned at 7:20 p.m.

Date Approved: _____

Chair/Board Member