

FCBGF Board Meeting Minutes – August 13, 2024

Present: Scott Aker, Matt Ashby, Derek Baker, Randy Byers, Shaina Case, Keren Meister-Emerich, Sharron Kelsey, Tom Lacock, Khale Lenhart, Jaime Liberty, Mark Rinne, Jason Sanchez, Tracy Wilson, Kerri Young

Absent: Janelle Rose

Call to order:

Khale Lenhart called the meeting to order at 5:31 pm in the Gathering Room at the Cheyenne Botanic Gardens. Thirteen (13) voting members were present, and a quorum was established.

Approval of minutes from May 21, 2024, meeting:

Khale asked for a motion to approve the minutes from the May 21, 2024 meeting. Randy moved to approve the minutes from the May 21st board meeting. Keren seconded. Khale asked for discussion. No discussion was raised. Khale called for a vote to approve the May 21, 2024 meeting minutes. Motion carried unanimously.

Chair's Report/Executive Committee Report –Chair Khale Lenhart

Khale reported that the ongoing Blackbaud contract dispute has come to an end. We have reached a settlement of a fraction of what we budgeted. We are awaiting on paperwork and will sign it as soon as we have it and mail in the check. Khale mentioned that there is a non-disparagement clause in the contract so we need to avoid criticizing the company publicly.

Khale noted that this year's Nominating Committee will slate new officers since the two-year terms are up for all four. The committee will also slate one to two new members. Khale moved to appoint Derek, Janelle, and Keren to the committee. Tom seconded. Motion carried unanimously. The committee will meet to create a slate of officers for the 2025 calendar year, as well as a slate to fill one to two board positions. The board will vote on the slates at the October 8 meeting.

Director's Report – Scott Aker, CBG Manager

(Please see the printed report in the meeting packet.)

Master Plan

Scott reported that the master plan is finished and vetted by the mayor and CRE so we can proceed with it. He noted that the first priority probably should be a core path circuit since everything will be built around it. We plan to apply for a Land and Water Conservation Fund grant for that. Scott believes installing irrigation around the path at the time it is built is prudent so that we only have widespread construction once and the path isn't damaged by irrigation system installation later. Both the EAT and Sensory Garden projects are partially funded by private donors so we will likely start with those. Both will need design work before breaking ground or tearing up spaces. There is a designer in Fort Collins who is interested in doing design work for us. While our horticulture staff is doing a great job maintaining what we have now, as we transition existing turf to garden areas, we will likely need to build our staff to maintain new gardens. We have committed volunteers, but we cannot maintain spaces with only volunteers. We do have some capability to hire part-time staff in the near future.

Staffing and Building

Scott hopes to better integrate all of our staff. Right now, the children's village staff are someone separate from the rest of the staff. Integration will help us stay consistent in maintaining all of our spaces. He noted that there has been some neglect on the grounds as we have focused on the conservatory building since it was built and existed without a full horticulture staff for several months. We are working hard to revisit areas on the ground that need attention. We are also going to build a structure to harden off plants in the conservatory building backyard. It'll be about 20'X24' with a concrete floor and permanent metal hoops with hail netting. This will help with efficiency in hardening.

We may use a contractor in the future to help with bedding plants around town, including the plaza and other city areas. This will allow us to spend more time on our grounds.

Other Projects

The CBG has gotten a grant from the BLM for \$30,000 over 3-years to help establish germination and growing protocols for some narrow endemic species in Wyoming. We will be collecting seed in Fremont County to germinate and grow. The project is existing from a research and conservation perspective.

We are hosting a tour for the American Public Gardens Association meeting in Denver on June 2, 2025. We are also hosting the annual conference of the North American Rock Garden Society in June of 2025. Connor Smith from Utrecht Botanic Gardens in the Netherlands is the keynote speaker. Myron Cook, a geologist from the Riverton area, will also speak at the June meeting.

The gift shop is doing well. We are growing plants in the production house for *Dia de los Muertos*, and we'll have a handful of 8' *Catrin*s on display in the conservatory building and the children's village from mid-September through October for that celebration. The McCoy Celebration Garden is beginning to take shape in the conservatory.

We have determined that the idea of forming a citywide community garden program is not ripe. The notion is a good one, but it will take time, planning, and appropriate resources to do a good job. We will keep it on the back burner for now.

The PBS program, *Antiques Roadshow*, called to inquire about hosting an episode at the gardens in the next year. Recent episodes have been filmed at Colorado and Idaho public gardens. Scott is communicating with them to better understand what is involved. It won't be until perhaps July of 2025.

Foundation Executive Director's Report – Jill Lovato

(Please also refer to the written report in the meeting packet.)

Membership

Jill reported that membership finished strong for the fiscal year 2024 with 42 memberships renewed or purchased with the arboretum plant sale.

Major Fundraising Activities

This year's annual appeal for the Paul Smith Children's Village is nearly wrapped up. It is currently at \$91,000 of our \$75,000 public goal with \$7550 coming from WyoGives. We have one naming right left – the backyard hoop house for \$10,000. The miniature golf tournament revenue will go toward the annual appeal as well.

Jill continues to seek a handful of new donors. They include a \$7,500 naming right donor for a Wardian Case to house carnivorous plants in the conservatory building, \$4000 for the Spring Bulb Show (Jonah Bank of Wyoming has contributed \$1000 as co-sponsor), \$2500 for *Dia de los Muertos*, and \$5000 for Conservatory of Lights. Please send Jill ideas for potential donors.

Miniature Golf Tournament

We will be hosting our 2nd Annual Miniature Golf Tournament on Sunday, August 25. We have a handful of hole sponsor spots left for \$250, which includes a complimentary team entry. Jill also encouraged board members to register to play and/or contribute a raffle item. We need 8-10 high quality items or baskets. Things that do well are booze baskets, experiences like gift cards to local restaurants or the movie theater, handmade art like quilts and pottery, and locally made products. Please let Jill know if you'd like to sponsor a hole or provide a raffle item as soon as possible. And please help spread the word. It's a fun event, and we still have room for ten more teams! This year we also have a kids' division for players 10-16 years old.

The event begins with player check-in, raffle ticket sales, and refreshments at 1:00, followed by a shotgun start at 2:30 at the Putt Hutt. We will return to the gardens to crown the winners and draw for the raffles.

Volunteer Liaison Report –Sharron Kelsey, Volunteer Liaison

Sharron noted that the suggestion box is going dormant for a while due to lack of suggestions; however, a volunteer reported that a visitor complemented the watercolors of gardens main attractions.

Volunteers are happy to have snacks back in the snack drawer and often comment about how much they enjoy meeting visitors. The greeter chair is fine with the volunteers so no need to address the issue further. Trudy will be showing greeter desk volunteers how to adjust it.

Finance Committee – Kerri Young

(please refer to the May through July financial and committee reports in your board meeting packet)

Kerri noted the treasurer's reports in the meeting packet, pointing out that the committee has met twice since the last board meeting. We ended fiscal year 2024 with total revenue in the operating budget of \$98K of net income. With expenditures, the net income on the year is \$13,850 for operating. We were over budget in the professional fees category by \$6900 due to two tax reviews in one fiscal year. Jill is working with DAPCPA, our accountant, to ensure this will not happen again. All of our taxes have been filed on time. The project budget total revenue was \$205K and expenses were \$182K, leaving a net inflow of \$24,000 for the fiscal year.

The committee met with Pete Kline, our financial advisory from RBC this summer. Based on conversations with him, we felt confident making the \$45,000 grant from the gardens from interest on the endowment. The entire grant has been made. We saw a healthy gain of \$150K gains in our investments, which is much stronger than in recent years.

Finally, the committee has moved some of the funds in our RBC projects account to liquid assets to be used on early master plan projects at Pete's advice.

Membership & Development Committee – Tracy Wilson

Tracy reported that the committee has met and is hosting the miniature golf tournament. She encouraged board members to contribute raffle items and to register for the tournament. It is easy income for a fun afternoon.

Community and Government Relations Committee – no report

This committee is not active and does not currently have any members.

Building & Grounds – Randy Byers and Scott Aker

Scott noted that the master plan was delivered. Please see above director's report. He also reported that we have had trouble with our USPS carrier not letting us know about package deliveries before 10:00 am or on Mondays. This results in staff going to the post office to pick up packages, which is inefficient. At the board's suggestion, Scott will look into having a delivery box installed near the mailbox.

Scott is working on having the skylights examined after some leaking in the recent heavy rains.

We are having some software-related problems with our Argus Argus system the production house.

Randy reported that a contractor is pricing the lath house rebuild. We may be able to make improvements to it in the rebuild, as well. He's also coordinating the pricing of stone to put a curb around the sandbox. At the same time, we'll look at creating more safety by replacing the hardscape near the water wheel to avoid slip hazards. The new bridge will also have non-slip tread. Some of the pavers at the CV entrance will be replaced with stone instead of concrete pavers.

Arboretum Committee – Scott Aker, Derek Baker, and Randy Byers

Scott reported a successful farm-to-table event last weekend at the arboretum. There were about 40 people in attendance. The lath house was decorated with carpets and sofas, lots of flowers, and quite beautiful. It sparked interest in volunteering at the arboretum and also in renting the space for events. The newly paved road is a significant improvement.

We continue to work on the MOU between city and state. We expect the enabling bill to be introduced again in the upcoming legislative session. State Parks has received permission from the AG's office to do some studies with a portion of the funding set aside for the arboretum. Scott said he's talked to folks about greenhouse renovation, and Randy has suggestions on who else to speak with. Scott and Randy both agree that it should be built to its original condition. It really just needs new glazing. State Parks will need guidance on that. Randy added that he has suggested State Parks replace the headhouse roof with existing funding to preserve the inside of that building. Mark mentioned that there is a partner meeting the week of August 26th.

Roundtop Reservoir went dry before this last big rain. There is some talk about refilling it more than once a year for irrigation purposes, and an irrigation system installed at the arboretum would make irrigation more efficient. Watering trees with trucks is keeping trees alive, which is critical, but it is not efficient in terms of water or time.

City Council Update – Dr. Mark Rinne

Dr. Rinne reported that Council approved an initial ordinance change that will create a return to paid parking downtown. Additionally, work began on annexation for the Front Range Business Park west of town. The DDA zone will also increase by annexation. The city is also hoping that the airline will provide a bigger plane for its flight to keep up with demand. DT's and Tuskers wants to sell its liquor license to 307 Racing. Interested parties can make public comment on that. June sales tax revenues were up. Most of the increase is due to non-residential building construction, likely due to the data center construction.

Community Recreation & Events Report –Jason Sanchez, CRE Director

Jason provided the CRE quarterly report included in the email from Jill containing the packet for this meeting.

He gave a projects update: gymnastic facilities construction is underway. The city is getting bids for depot renovations outdoors, to the restrooms, and to the old kitchenette area. Renovations should be finished by next summer. The Johnson Pool is 70 years old and should be replaced. The city is working on design now and hopes it might be a 6th penny project. The concession and restroom building at Dutcher ball fields is being replaced, and the city is getting bids to replace the lighting after receiving some funding for that. Saddle Ridge Park playground is being replaced. The city is getting a new goose dog. Her name is Jill. Flo, the original city goose dog, is 13 years old and has cataracts. The dogs are used to haze geese to encourage them to move along and not stay in one location. Hazing can only take place with goslings can fly, so time is limited for this activity. Jill and Flo will work together in 3-4 months when Jill is bonded to her handlers and Flo. We have 40-50 geese in Lions Park currently, and one goose drops 2-4 pounds of feces per day. The city also uses remote control boats for larger bodies of water like Sloan's Lake and Holiday Park. CRE is hosting the Wyoming Parks and Rec Conference this fall. Scott noted that we will be applying for a permit to haze the night herons. They have created an incredible mess and are preventing certain spaces from being used for weddings. The gazebo outside the children's village was vandalized last weekend. Repairs will be made soon.

New Business

None raised.

Adjourn

Khale reminded the board of our next meeting on October 8. We will be voting on the new officer and new member slates. Please attend.

Khale asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting. Jaime moved to adjourn. Keren seconded. No opposition was raised. Khale adjourned the meeting at 6:38.

Next Meeting: Tuesday, October 8, at 5:30 pm – New Member and Office Slate Presentation and Vote

2024 Meeting Schedule

October 8 (New Member and Officer Slate)

December 10