

FCBGF Board Meeting Minutes – February 12, 2024

Present: Scott Aker, Derek Baker, Randy Byers, Shaina Case, Keren Meister-Emerich, Sharron Kelsey, Jaime Liberty, Janelle Rose, Kerri Young

Absent: Matt Ashby, Tom Lacock, Khale Lenhart, Mark Rinne, Jason Sanchez, Tracy Wilson

Vice Chair Randy Byers conducted this meeting because Chair Khale Lenhart was absent.

Call to order:

Randy Byers called the meeting to order at 5:32 pm in the Gathering Room at the Cheyenne Botanic Gardens. Eight (8) voting members were present, and a quorum was established with two proxies. Derek Baker had Tom Lacock's proxy. Randy Byers had Khale Lenhart's proxy.

Randy moved agenda items III. c) and III. d) to the end of the agenda.

Randy welcomed Sharron Kelsey to the board. Sharron will hold the volunteer liaison position.

Approve minutes from December 12, 2023, meeting:

Randy asked for a motion to approve the minutes from the December 12, 2023 meeting. Keren moved to approve the minutes from the December 12 board meeting. Derek seconded. Randy asked for discussion. Sharron recused herself from voting because she was not present at that meeting. No additional discussion was raised. Randy called for a vote to approve the December 12, 2023 meeting minutes. Motion carried unanimously.

Chair's Report/Executive Committee Report – Vice Chair Randy Byers

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

Randy noted that Khale was away for work. He welcomed Sharron Kelsey to the board.

Sharron mentioned that she began volunteering at the CBG in 2015. She has volunteered in horticulture and the gift shop. Currently, she waters in the conservatory building on Mondays with two other volunteers.

Board Vote to Change Names on Blue FCU Account

Randy noted that, during the December board meeting, we voted to add the names of current executive committee members to the foundation's Blue Federal Credit Union account. The board passed that vote, but we failed to remove the former board members currently on the account. We need to do that tonight.

Randy asked for a motion to make Khale Lenhart, Kerri Young, and Jill Lovato signatories at the Blue Federal Credit Union account of the Friends of the Cheyenne Botanic Gardens and to remove Shane Smith, Patrick Barrett, and Ray Martin from the account. Keren moved. Janelle seconded. Randy asked for discussion. Sharron asked what documentation the bank required. Randy responded that we need meeting minutes reflecting a board vote to remove and add names. No further discussion was raised. Randy called for a vote on the motion. Motion carried unanimously.

Director's Report – Scott Aker, CBG Manager

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

Scott reported that two volunteers passed away this weekend. Mary Dell Long and Gordon Johns were both ill.

Scott directed board members to his written report. He happily reported that the new orchid display and vanilla arbor are installed and look beautiful. We are stalled on the stonework in the conservatory as we await a second bid. Scott is eager to get that project underway. Isaiah is working to add stone to the fairy garden to create more of a crevice garden. We removed the wood bamboo and one of the banana trees that wasn't getting enough light.

We had a very successful Conservatory of Lights. We won't use a contract light installer next time, but we will need to budget more funding for next year. Having a scissor lift would make installation much easier.

The first master plan public engagement meeting is on February 20 from 5:00 to 7:30 pm at the gardens in the Gathering Room. It will be an open house.

Scott and Isaiah will be presenting at the North American Rock Garden Society in early March in Oakland. Additionally, Scott will show a short film to attract folks to the annual meeting in 2025, which the CNG is hosting. The American Public Gardens Association is having its annual meeting in Denver in 2025. They will bring a tour to the CBG. Both of these meetings will take place in June 2025.

Based on master plan discussions, we have determined that the Bedont Rose Garden and Reckling Herb Garden will remain in their currently uses with some renovation. The Bedont Rose Garden will be retooled this summer with 23 new varieties of roses. The nearby turf around the greenhouse will be removed, and the space will be used as a trial area.

Bookings for rentals at the gardens are on the uptick with many events already booked for the rest of the year.

We miss Trudy Fox already, but we will likely hire a part-time person to fill that role. Trudy has applied for it.

Isaiah and Scott have submitted a grant proposal to the BLM for funding to collect and work on optimal germination and growing protocol for four narrow endemics native to a very small area southeast of Lander. If successful in this proposal, we would retain a few plants here for conservation.

Foundation Executive Director's Report – Jill Lovato

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

End-of-Year Appeal

Jill reported that this year's end-of-year appeal yielded \$8200 of our \$15,000 goal. She noted that we are still doing well with operating revenue versus expenses, but this outcome is disappointing. It remains difficult to raise operating funds.

Other Activities

Jill reported that she submitted a proposal to Women's Civic League for just under \$13,000 for a hoop house/hail structure for the backyard of the conservatory building. This will allow for much better annual hardening off and provide hail protection for young plants.

Jill is also contacting current sponsors for renewal. She asked that board members let her know if they have contacts they would be willing to share for potential new sponsors.

Jill also said that she is working to move to digital membership cards using Engage by Cell, an interpretive platform we already use for self-guided tours. This should be done by the end of the month. Jill will do an annual sweep of lapsed memberships in the next few weeks and work with the Membership & Development Committee on a membership drive for National Public Gardens week, which is May 10-19.

Finally, Jill reported that the CBG will host its first public engagement meeting on the master plan on Tuesday, February 20 from 5:00 to 7:30 pm in the conservatory building. All board members are encouraged to attend.

Randy encouraged board members to attend the public engagement meeting for the master plan. He reported that Russell Mills has done a good job, and there are many opportunities for the board to become involved.

Scott noted that the CBG will focus social media presence on the over 200 bird species that have been sited on our grounds during National Public Gardens Week.

Volunteer Liaison Report –Sharron Kelsey, Volunteer Liaison

Sharron said she has been thinking about a way to collect volunteer opinions and thoughts that she could share with the staff and board. She would like to put an opinions box in the volunteer break room. Scott and Randy encouraged her to do so, and Scott said he would provide the box. Sharron will also report to the volunteers on board activities. Sharron and Jill will work on a language to summarize the goal of the box and how to use it.

Finance Committee – Kerri Young

(please refer to the December financial and committee report in your board meeting packet)

Kerri noted the treasurer's report in the meeting packet pointing out that the committee conducted its annual review of the investment policy at its last meeting. No changes were made. Currently, total operating revenue is just over \$67,500 with expenses at \$33,657. Project revenue is at \$72,580 with expenses at \$92,618. Some of the expenses were covered with funds raised in previous years. Kerri reminded the group that we did not budget for the foundation's portion of the master plan. We paid for our \$20,000 portion with cash on hand. We continue to pay for the quarterly grant installations with cash on hand, as well, to preserve our invested funds. The Finance Committee will meet again on February 22, 2024.

Randy noted that the organization has done a lot of good things through grants and still retains a significant corpus. It's admirable that the organization has sustained and grown funding over the last 10 years.

Randy asked for a motion to approve Treasurer's report. Derek moved. Keren seconded. No discussion was raised. Randy called for a vote to approve the Treasurer's report. Motion carried unanimously.

Membership & Development Committee – Tracy Wilson

No report.

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

Please see the Director's Report above for a master plan update.

Randy noted that we have a master plan meeting this week with Russell Mills. Jason Sanchez has been integrally involved, which has been helpful. There are some worthwhile organizational aspects to the master plan, including a renovation of the pathways to a more interconnected traffic flow.

Derek asked for a sense of where we are in the process. Are we meeting the deliverables deadlines so far?

Scott said we are at least 60% finished. He also noted that we are staying within a reasonable financial footprint for this plan. We will be able to do the things we are planning. It's achievable, but it will also accomplish some big things. And most importantly, it will unify our spaces. We will also define the boundary between the CBG and the rest of Lions Park clearly. The proposed changes will require additional staff to maintain.

Randy reported that we have the stone in hand for the Peace Garden water feature. It will be installed by Johnson Masonry when the weather improves this spring.

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

Please see the Director's Report above for an arboretum update.

Randy reported that HB84 establishes the the arboretum as a state historic site. Within HB1 (the budget bill) there is \$5M earmark as startup for State Parks for the site. The non-budget bill, HB84, will take a 2/3 majority vote to make it to the floor for a vote. There is the potential that it will not meet the introduction threshold and that the budget will go through with the \$5M earmark for the site. The Governor would likely use line-item veto to eliminate that budget earmark since the site would not exist under the purview of the state. Strong support seems to exist among legislators for the enabling legislation.

Derek added that the information session at the Wyoming State Museum a couple of weeks ago was well-attended. Feedback and questions were positive from those who attended.

Randy added that there are a lot of moving parts. In addition to the enabling legislation and the budget line item, there would have to be a transfer from the USDA of the buildings to the city and then to the state.

Derek noted that a lot of work has gone in to getting it this far along. Jessica's book and the work of this foundation have raised the profile of the site and its history.

Randy mentioned that Shane Smith wrote a great op-ed in the Cowboy State Daily about the site and its history.

Scott noted that the proposed city budget includes the permanent city position at the arboretum overseen by Urban Forestry.

City Council Update – Dr. Mark Rinne, unable to attend but provided the written report below.

In the last month, Council has:

Approved new LED lighting for the Civic Center

Annexed 29 acres at the SE corner of Del Range and Converse. A new church will be built there. We do not know the denomination.

Approved a contract for design for some upgrades to the Depot Lobby

Approved a bid for upgrades and repairs to the Spiker Garage bathrooms. We are purchasing the most vandal proof fixtures possible.

Rezoned the location of the Subway on Del Range to allow for construction on a drive up. Apparently, the existing building will be torn down and replaced with, (you guessed it) a drive through coffee shop

Approved a zone change on the N side of Pershing, between McCann and College. The intent is to build another auto service center.

Approved a contract for the construction of a new gymnastics center to be located next to the Ice and Events Center

We closed on the BEAST recreation facility on Jan 31.

As always, if you have any questions, you can always email me.

Community Recreation & Events Report –Jason Sanchez, CRE Director

No report. Jason was unable to attend the meeting.

New Business

Keren asked if we are hosting the arboretum plant sale again this year. Jill answered that we will host a cash and carry sale the first weekend in June at the arboretum. There will not be a pre-sale event.

Adjourn

Randy asked for a board vote to adjourn to Executive Session. Derek moved to adjourn to Executive Session. Keren seconded. Randy added to the motion that Jill will remain to take minutes. Randy asked for discussion. No discussion was raised. Motion carried unanimously.

The board adjourned to executive session at 6:18 pm.

The board adjourned executive session at 6:30 pm.

Derek moved to adjourn the board meeting. Keren seconded. Randy asked for discussion. None was raised. Randy called for a vote to adjourn the board meeting. Motion carried unanimously.

Randy adjourned the board meeting at 6:30 pm

Next Meeting: Tuesday, April 9, 2024, at 5:30 pm

2024 Meeting Schedule

April 9

May 21 (FY25 Budget Meeting)

August 13

October 8 (New Member and Officer Slate)

December 10