

FCBGF Board Meeting Minutes – December 10, 2024

Present: Derek Baker, Randy Byers, Shaina Case*, Keren Meister-Emerich, Sharron Kelsey, Tom Lacock, Khale Lenhart, Mark Rinne*, Janelle Rose, Jason Sanchez, Aaron Sommers (for Scott Aker), Tracy Wilson, Kerri Young

Absent: Scott Aker, Matt Ashby, Jaime Liberty

**Mark Rinne and Shaina Case arrived after quorum was established.

Call to order:

Khale Lenhart called the meeting to order at 5:30 pm in the Gathering Room at the Cheyenne Botanic Gardens. Ten (10) voting members were present, and a quorum was established.

Approval of minutes from October 8, 2024, meeting:

Khale asked for a motion to approve the minutes from the October 8, 2024 meeting. Randy moved to approve the minutes from the October 8th board meeting. Tom seconded. Khale asked for discussion. No discussion was raised. Khale called for a vote to approve the October 8, 2024 meeting minutes. Motion carried unanimously.

Chair's Report/Executive Committee Report:

Khale thanked Derek Baker for his decade of service on this board, including as Chair. He noted the accomplishment and lasting impact Derek has had on the garden and presented a framed print of a Herb Schaal watercolor of the Paul Smith Children's Village as a gift of thanks. Derek said it was an honor to serve. He noted the significant advancement of the gardens over these years, including the grand conservatory building, the completion of the recent master plan, and the momentum around the arboretum.

Khale reported that Meredith Asay and Gary Steele will join the board in January as was presented in the slate voted on in October. We look forward to working with both of them. Additionally, new officers will be taking office January 1. Randy Byers will be Chair; Kerri Young will serve as Vice Chair; Jaime Liberty will serve as Treasurer; and Tracy Wilson will continue as Secretary.

Khale pointed out that, with new officers coming on, we need to change signatory names on bank accounts. Khale asked for a motion to remove Khale Lenhart from all financial accounts and add Jaime Liberty. (Kerri Young will remain on all accounts.)

Keren moved to remove Khale Lenhart and to add Jaime Liberty to all bank accounts. Sharron seconded. Khale asked for discussion. None raised. Motion carried unanimously.

Director's Report – Aaron Sommers, Assistant Director, CBG

Scott Aker was unable to attend the meeting due to health issues.

Aaron Sommers reported that Scott has been largely out taking care of some health issues related to his current cancer treatment. He hopes to be back in the office more, beginning next week and back to full-time in the next two weeks. Staff has been working well together in his absence.

Aaron noted that Dia de los Muertos was a great success with over 1,200 people in attendance. Horticulture staff grew around 1,000 celosia and marigolds for the event. Attention is now turned to hosting Conservatory of Lights, which is a timed and ticketed event this year to control crowds. We have averaged about 300/night so far and can accommodate up to 400/night. The response has been very positive from visitors. Santa will be at the PSCV December 13 and 14 for the 15th consecutive year.

Horticulture staff and volunteers planted 10,000 bulbs this fall for spring bloom. Production of annuals will begin in February.

Aaron reported that the 2024 annual appeal funding is being spent. Completions to date include lath house renovation/reconstruction and the installation of six benches. The sandbox stone curbing and concrete replacement at the entrance is forthcoming. We are also currently working on the engineering of a replacement stationary bridge over the water feature. Concrete around the pond will be replaced in the spring. Remaining funds will be used for turf area enhancements. Michelle and Rick Schum have sponsored programming at the PSCV for 2025, which will ramp up again in January.

New concrete was poured in the Maness Production House on the west side for proper drainage. Concrete also went in for the seasonal high tunnel in the conservatory backyard. This structure will be used for hardening off and installed in the coming months.

Janelle asked if Aaron needed help with the Santa visit. Aaron invited everyone to come by. He noted how fun the event is. He and his wife and daughter host the Santa event, which has become a family tradition for them.

Randy, Jason, and Sharron all noted how fortunate we are to have Aaron at the PSCV.

Foundation Executive Director's Report – Jill Lovato

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

Membership

Jill reported a small bump in recent memberships due to several gift memberships and generally more renewal in memberships at the end of the year.

Major Fundraising Activities

The end-of-year mailer went out late last week. All revenue will be applied to operating costs, and Jill hopes to see \$7,500 or more in donations.

She is still seeking annual sponsors for 2025 and recently received an annual sponsorship to the Paul Smith Children's Village of \$5,000 from Rick and Michelle Schum. She also received a \$10,000 memorial gift that will be applied to either the Sensory Garden or the Four Seasons Cottage Garden when those two projects from the master plan begin. She will work with the donor to choose a meaningful naming right in one of those spaces.

Jill noted that she has applied for a 2025 marketing grant from Visit Cheyenne. These funds would be used in the same fashion as last year's grant award – for marketing of annual events to people outside and inside Laramie County. Last year, we received \$2,000, and Jill has applied for the same amount this year. We use it for Wyoming Public Radio underwriting and social media paid ads. She will also be

applying for a Civic League grant for plant tags for the conservatory and a Delta Kappa Gamma grant for two replacement interpretive signs in the conservatory and a few adult enrichment class durable goods.

Finally, Jill reported that she will be conducting the annual membership sweep in early 2025 to remind lapsed members of the benefits membership brings.

Volunteer Liaison Report – Sharron Kelsey, Volunteer Liaison

Sharron reported that all of the volunteers are on winter break until February. Some will be back in January. Greeters are still working at the front desk and in the gift shop.

Finance Committee – Kerri Young, Treasurer

(please refer to the October financials and November committee report in your board meeting packet)

Kerri noted total operating revenue as of October 31 was just over \$12,000. Expenses were just under \$19,000, resulting in a net loss of about \$7,000, which is typical of this time of year. Project revenue as of October 31 was \$88,496. We have paid out \$39,000 in project expenses. Investment interest income has totaled about \$56,000, and dividends income is at about \$27,000. This year, we paid the \$45,000 grant to the gardens in one lump sum on July 1 from investments.

Kerri invited questions on the report. None raised.

Membership & Development Committee – 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, Derek Baker, Aaron Sommers

Randy and Aaron noted that most building and grounds updates are in Aaron's report above. Aaron added that the CV greenhouse is getting a new controller that will tie in with the existing system. Supplemental growing lights will be replaced in the production greenhouse.

Arboretum Committee – Scott Aker and Randy Byers

Randy asked Jill to report on the upcoming legislative session to establish a historic site at the High Plains Arboretum. He noted that it will be an uphill battle to get enabling legislation passed and that State Parks is hopeful that the funding from last year's budget session will remain intact but doesn't anticipate any significant progress on the historic site enabling legislation.

Jill reported that there's been a suggestion that a letter, an informational one-pager, and the book be sent to all legislators with an invitation for questions or tours. This would be informational only.

Khale noted that our considerations in this action are: is it going to make a difference? Do we want to spend our time and capital on this? He opened the floor to discussion.

Keren questioned whether legislators would read the book. She suggested that a flyer and letter be sent, highlighting the main talking points.

Janelle asked if the legislative funding that was allocated last year has been spent and could it be rescinded. Some has been spent on studies (by State Parks and Cultural Resources, the department to which the funds were allocated), and some remains. The remaining funds could be rescinded during this upcoming session if not encumbered. She suggested that we tread lightly and not bring too much attention to the project. Randy agreed.

Randy reported that State Parks has a one-pager that could be shared again. He repeated that the best-case scenario this year is for funding to stay in place and for the climate around this type of spending to shift in the next two years.

Jason is concerned that the letter might toe the line on lobbying so coming from the city would not be in line with the city's guidelines.

Randy suggested that the letter be revised if we send it.

Tom suggested that we highlight the tree production potential because that use might be palatable to the current group. He suggested that we be prepared to demonstrate financial value of the project and its regional function to replace trees statewide but that we not take initiative immediately with a mailer.

Randy noted that State Forestry may be putting that word out. While production there could be useful, its capacity doesn't come close to replacing what's been lost by fire and other statewide tree needs.

Janelle suggested using a lobbyist to educate the legislature in testimony form. Randy replied that there may not be a testimony opportunity if the bill fails introduction. Tom said one-on-one education would be more effective than testimony with the current legislature.

Mark agreed that we should have a letter demonstrating the function and value of the site for production as an education piece. He suggested it come from the foundation, rather than the city.

Tom noted that, in the letter, we should answer the question what are we trying to solve for? Tours of the site don't necessarily answer that question.

Jason noted that the VA has said they are installing bathrooms. That work has not begun, and we haven't seen a timeline for it.

Tom suggested having an action plan in place for responding to whatever comes up this session: a letter, maybe a video. Khale noted that this group is not interested in paying for books to be sent to every legislator.

Tom noted that the Travel, Wildlife, and Recreation Committee might be somewhat receptive to information.

Randy pointed out that that highlighting the agricultural value to the legislature would be wise, along with the production value.

Khale suggested that we not do anything heading into the session. Rather, he suggested that the arboretum committee begin to develop an action plan for longer term work. Tom added that the arboretum committee and the community and government relations committee work together on this. Janelle mentioned that refinement of key points would be useful. Khale said new board member, Meredith Asay, would be helpful on this, as a former lobbyist. Jill will pull together both committees after the first of the year.

City Council Update – Dr. Mark Rinne

Dr. Rinne reported that Council met last night Nellie's was awarded a bar and grill license and is coming to the airport terminal soon. Council approved the initial phase for downtown parking, which will designate an area for parking fees. Fee establishment will take place next. The Downtown Business Collective provided the impetus for this legislation, and Captain Janes of the CPD has conducted regional and national research and learned that this is the best approach for parking turnover to benefit downtown businesses. Council has created business park zone requirements for landscaping; however, these requirements were reasonable for an urban area but not appropriate for the large business areas we are seeing now. New requirements have been relaxed for those large-scale developments. North Range Business Park has been annexed. On the east side of town, county pockets continue to be annexed. A five- or six-story apartment building with retail on the first floor is going in on Holiday Park's southwest corner. The oversized vehicle ordinance passed Council this week with some modifications. Oversized vehicles must be removed from city streets after Labor Day 2025. They can remain for the summer from five days before Memorial Day to five days after Labor Day. The storm water utility also passed. This utility bill is estimated to be about \$8/month on average and will provide funding for storm water projects like cleaning up Dry Creek and Crow Creek. It pertains to the impervious surfaces on all lots– driveway, roof, etc. and also applies to commercial and industrial properties like the airport. Sixth penny sales were down eight of the last ten months, including down 7% for October. Finally, \$2.3M in the current city budget went unspent and was returned to the general fund. The city is giving a Christmas bonus of \$2,000 to every full-time employee and \$1,000 to every part-time employee.

Community Recreation & Events Report –Jason Sanchez, CRE Director

Jason reported that CRE is nearing completion of the gymnastic facility construction, four to five months ahead of schedule and under budget. The department is also working on the southern exterior of the depot and hopes to finish bricking and fencing by Christmas. The flooring and counter is finished in the café. Restrooms on the first floor will be finished in early January. After that, work will begin on the second floor and on a shade structure on the plaza. The Ducher Field building will be demolished soon with construction of a new concession and bathroom building to follow. The department is also working on the budget. Jason has given permission for restoration work to take place on-site on Old Sadie with a canopy around it. He said that work will not impede or negatively impact the CBG grounds. This method was successful on Big Boy in Holiday Park. Finally, Jason thanked Dr. Rinne and Council for the bonus. City employees are so grateful.

New Business

None raised.

Adjourn

Khale reminded the board of our next meeting on February 11, 2025. Next year's schedule is below. Please mark your calendars.

Meeting adjourned at 6:34.

Next Meeting: Tuesday, February 11, 2025 at 5:30 in the Gathering Rooms