

CCGA Coordinating Meeting

Monday, November 18, 2019, 6:00 PM - 8:00 PM

The Hatchery Chicago

Present at the meeting were: Julie Samuels, Kimberly George, Amy Olson, Mamie Gray, JW Glass, Lorraine Kells and, briefly, Angela Taylor and Gina Jamison

1. Welcome & Call to Order

The meeting started about 6:30. Amy took notes and JW was the timekeeper. We reviewed the agenda and added the education committee to the committee reports section.

We reviewed the notes from the last meeting:

- Cordia mentioned that she liked the MOTM approach to the conference planning in 2019 - more of a team approach than placing all the responsibility on one person.
- We followed up with Lorraine about the city proposal requiring water permits for urban farms. She said the link could be found on the AUA website.

This is the information about applying for a hydrant permit (AO could not find anything related to a new proposal):

<https://auachicago.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/How-to-Apply-for-Community-Garden-Hydrant-Permit- rev04.2019.pdf>

- There was a questions about the status of the livestock ordinance proposal, and Lorraine said that there is still time for input by the community, and a vote was not expected any time soon. We posted an alert on Facebook and also included an article in the fall newsletter. Lorraine also asked for CCGA to be included on the partner letter opposing the ordinance.

2. 2020 Conference Planning

Date

We are looking at a Saturday in March. The question was raised about what other organizations are doing in March, namely the Flower and Garden Show (March 18-22) <https://chicagoflower.com/> and the Good Food Fest. The order of preference for the date is:

- March 28
- March 14
- March 7

We could consider March 21 and do something at or in conjunction with the 2020 Flower & Garden Show (see Venue notes). We should reach out to the organizers.

Venue

We brainstormed possible venues and decided that each of us would visit or follow up with the venue and report back at the next meeting. Here's the list:

Location	Who suggested/will visit	Comments
The Abby	Email / NO	Has theater space no classrooms
Austin Town Hall	Julie	
Chicago State	NO	too far south, not convenient to public transport
Gary Comer Center	Cordia	
Garfield Park Conservatory	NO	not enough classrooms
Hatchery	Angela/NO	not enough classrooms
IIT	Julie	
Institute of Cultural Affairs (ICA)	Angela	Great building, Sustainability Leadership Network
Kenwood Academy	Cordia	
Lincoln Park Zoo	Kimberly	
Malcolm X	JW	
Marshall Elem.	Email / NO	in Bellwood? Not likely adult space
Marshall HS.	Angela	
North Park Village	Amy	
Truman College	Lorraine	
West Side Tech Inst.	JW	
Whitney Young	Lorraine	

Chicago Flower & Garden Show

Could we tag on to this event? Since it's a 3-day event, could we partner with the show by having discounted tickets for the F&G Show as part of our swag bag? Parking at Navy Pier is a hassle. Who can check into this?

Theme

Lorraine reported that the Education Committee is meeting on Monday, Nov. 25 and will start the conversation about themes. She shared one idea "Gardening is Future Building" and topics could be built around the idea of shared assets. Julie will be participating in a Growing Gathering with Openlands and will discuss shared resources for gardeners. Once these meetings happen, the larger group can weigh in.

Network of Networks

Lorraine suggested, as a side topic, that we organize a 'Partners Retreat' to talk strategy with the other orgs we work with most: Openlands, AUA, U of I Extension, NeighborSpace, and Resources' vendors. She suggested an early morning time slot.

Sponsorship

We drafted documents for the 2018 conference that are pretty complete: a cover letter, a breakdown of levels, a CCGA highlights sheet, and a form. We all agreed that we start the process of seeking donations too late. Right now, we can send out a general letter soliciting sponsorships with something like " We're inviting you to participate and support our conference..."

What we can do:

- Review sponsorship docs from 2018 conference:
<https://www.dropbox.com/sh/qzs19qd088d5jfv/AAAYpPnvMVkXIHS5-ezRs1taa?dl=0>
- Review JW's list of potential sponsors.
- Brainstorm more potential sponsors and create a spreadsheet with contact information.
- Should we approach banks? How do we determine who to ask? Do we have ethical guidelines?
- JW is setting up a sponsorship web page for us to review

Workshops

We discussed the length of the workshops and decided that ALL workshops will be 1 hour 15 minutes instead of 1 hour as they have been.

At first, the thought was to have only the first workshop be 1 hour 15 mins, but after some discussion, it seemed easier for those who will repeat their workshops to have both be the same length. This will make hands-on demos and Q&A less rushed. This will push lunch off by lunch by 15 minutes and the conference can be end 15 minutes later.

Instead of keeping the breakfast open until after the first workshop, we could have coffee carts with snacks available, such as pastries, fruit, and yogurt. We could even do this ourselves with our own percolators and we could pick up the food. We need to factor this into the food budget.

Lorraine is networking with used bookstores Carpelibra and Turn the Page to bring a pop-up bookstore to the conference! She is soliciting donations of books, at least for the childrens' table.

Side Note: The producer of the film, The Killing Floor, Elsa Rasbek is in Chicago from Germany staying with Julie. The film will be shown at the Siskel Film Center. It's the story of the people who worked in the Back of the Yards. She made the film in the '80s but it's been rereleased.

3. CCGA Membership

We started by remembering the discussion about membership at the September 30, 2017 retreat, which had about 30 attendees. Here are the docs:

Agenda:

http://chicagocommunitygardens.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/01/CCGA-Retreat-Agenda-WorkingDoc_ver2.doc.pdf

Notes:

http://chicagocommunitygardens.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/CCGA_2017_Planning_Retreat_Notes.pdf

Julie gave the background of the NYC Community Garden Coalition, because they are the same size as the CCGA as far as number of gardens and potential members.

It has a formal structure. There are annual dues, attend at least 3 meetings over the course of the year with an annual membership meeting in the first quarter. It has an elected board of directors.

Website: <https://nyccgc.org/>

JW reminded the group that there was a governance model discussion at the retreat, and the discussion was about whether we wanted to evolve into a more formal governance model. Right now, we have an open governance model.

Julie reminded us that at a recent membership meeting, it was discussed that members shouldn't have to pay. We are not money-based, we are volunteer-based.

Cordia: We struggle with this membership question every year. People already think they are a member by supporting the conference and distributions. If we now ask them for a formal commitment, we can add a blurb about this on the conference registration form and be done with it.

Mamie: She gets questions from people about how to become a member, which is the opposite issue!

JW: Membership never evolved to a decision at the retreat, and it boiled down to two options: should individuals or gardens be members? He does not think that individuals should be solicited for membership, only gardens. We need to support gardeners, and keep doing what we are doing. People are already supporting CCGA monetarily through workshops, the conference, products/items for sale and plant distributions.

If we require gardens to be registered, that is a whole level of headache for the garden leaders to keep up with. He thinks we should ditch all member fees and go back to our list of sponsors for funding.

Amy: If CCGA were to become a 501c-3 non profit, then we could go after grants and funding that can help sustain CCGA over the long term. With this, we have to be more formally organized with a board. etc. for reporting. We are limited by our current structure.

Julie: Having a state charter means we can raise money. Do we have a state charter with our current arrangement with NeighborSpace as our fiscal agent?

Cordia: We need a sustainable model where money is coming from events, items AND sponsorships, grants, etc. Why can't we go for the non-profit status as we go along, it's not that complicated.

Mamie: We never figured out how to make sure people know how to get involved. People don't know they can come to the coordinating meetings. How can we remedy this? People ask Mamie about what else they can do and have this perception that they are not officially part of CCGA.

We have this in our newsletter and website, but it's not enough. We have to communicate it.

Lorraine: When people subscribe to the newsletter, we can send a reply that welcomes the 'new member': "Welcome to CCGA, please come to our next meeting and get involved." (This can be an automated reply when someone subscribes to our email list)

Mamie: We need to get the wording right and reach the new subscribers AND the existing ones. There are people who want to be more active in CCGA but don't know how.

Amy: It's a communications plan. We have 1,100 that get Mamie's email, 1,600 that are subscribed to the communications email and about 1,600 more followers on Facebook. That's our membership base! We need people to know what CCGA is all about and how they can get more involved. We can reach people immediately via our email list and craft a specific email that gets at the heart of what CCGA is and how to get involved that will go to ALL existing subscribers. We could drum up interest with a campaign, but the question is, do we want people to check a box to be a member and do we want them to pay?

We could model our engagement with gardeners similar to how AUA does it: they have ways to get involved like ward ambassadors, the list serv., action alerts, policy building. They are a non-profit, so they also have paid positions...

Julie: Getting more involved could also apply to 'garden teams' and volunteer opportunities citywide. This will take more coordination, but is something that we always wanted to do. It's not just about BEING a member, it's about opening up opportunities for gardeners to DO MORE. They can ask us for more than just plants! Gardeners want to get involved and affect positive change!

All: We need our own greenhouse!

JW: The open governance model allows for more flexibility, and doesn't require too much of a commitment from each volunteer - no terms required. Regularly scheduled meetings are the forum for

getting stuff done and connecting. I don't think we should have members. We just want to be supportive of gardeners.

Cordia: There should be a formalized process of how to engage with CCGA's coordinating committee, a way to engage outside of the conference, workshops and plant distributions.

Lorraine: The real issue for me is, are we going to have dues? Folks are already paying for plots in gardens and they will not want to shell out more money. I have no issue with membership, I have an issue with charging them.

Julie: Maybe in addition to getting plants, people could get assistance and information.

Julie: There should be a form that asks what people can bring to CCGA. What would you be willing to share with CCGA?

Kim: We could create a survey (Survey Monkey) with 10 questions that goes to every person: Would you like to volunteer? What for? What talents and skills can you bring to CCGA?

Mamie: There should be wording that encompasses the complete 'membership' structure and a person can join in. Don't let the people define it - we need a structure they can join.

Amy: If a person wants to be part of the coordinating committee and have voting rights, then perhaps there could be a requirement of attending 3 meetings first, for example.

The consensus is : Can a person be a member without paying a fee? YES
We will not solicit individuals to pay money, but by VOLUNTEERING like we do!

We will build our support for folks with a couple of hours on a Saturday, we could make it easier for folks to volunteer in gardens. This requires more coordination, more time.

Whoever commits to giving time and skills to CCGA matters. The more people we have, the more of a variety of skills and knowledge, the wider our network becomes.

This connects with the possible conference theme of "Gardening as Future-Building and social capital" We can roll this out as a campaign as part of the conference marketing.

CCGA membership is about engagement of gardeners with each other and with CCGA.

What are our next steps/wrap up:

- Julie will help define the ways people can become a member without providing a fee.
- We need to present a proposal for non-fee-based dues for membership.
- In addition, we also need to do a sponsorship push!

4. Very Brief Committee Updates

Education: Working on conference prep, RFP

Resources: Holiday event on December 7 in the lobby of the CGT with houseplants and decorations

Finance, Membership, Communications - skipped

5. Other Business

- JW and Mamie presented a proposal for a standing monthly CCGA coordinating meeting and JW has created a poll which will be sent out after the meeting and results will be shared at the December meeting.

6. Meeting Summary & Assignments

- All: Visit potential conference venues
- All: Develop draft conference budgets
- All: Review 2018 sponsorship docs (see link above)
- All: Brainstorm potential sponsors
- JW: Create sponsorship web page
- JW: Publish standing meeting poll
- Julie: define the ways people can become a member without providing a fee.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:00pm.

7. Next Meeting

Thursday, December 12, from 6-8pm, at CCGT