

CCGA Conference Planning Meeting
Tuesday, January 14, 2020, 1:00 PM - 3:30 PM
Whitney Young High School

Present at the meeting were: Julie Samuels, May Toy, Ellen Newcomer (briefly), Mamie Gray, Lorraine Kells, Gina Jamison, Cordia Pugh, Sam Taylor, Angela Taylor and Amy Olson. Bea Jasper participated via speakerphone.

1. Welcome & Call to Order

The meeting started about 1:20pm. Amy took notes and Gina was the timekeeper.

The agenda was reviewed and accepted.

There was a brief discussion about the decision by Resources to NOT procure door prizes at this year's conference. That discussion is included below under #3 - Resources.

2. Consideration of Conference Chair/MOTM Coordinator and Vote

Everyone agreed that it was a good idea to have a chairperson for the conference, and to organize a "Meeting of the Minds" as we did for the 2019 conference to work as a team.

Gina was nominated and accepted the nomination to be the 2020 conference chair. This will be presented at the coordinating meeting on January 21 for a final vote. The coordinating committee will have an opportunity to nominate other people as well.

3. Conference Planning Updates & Tasks

Communications

Amy gave an update:

- Email newsletter with the conference announcement and RFP was sent on January 6th. Lorraine added that the RFP info is also on the website and was posted on Facebook.
- Conference logo sketches are being worked on and will be brought to the 21st meeting. There was a discussion about creating a standard conference logo which can be updated every year with the theme instead of creating a new logo every year. This would help to give the conference a consistent brand and can help tie it into the overall CCGA brand even better. The group seemed supportive but having some visuals to respond to will be helpful to clarify. Amy will present ideas at the Jan. 21 coordinating meeting.
- As a reminder, the 2020 conference theme is Connections through Gardening: Plants, People and the Environment. We recapped the process for voting on the theme.

Urgent tasks:

- Create flyers/posters that can be distributed via email, social media and listservs. Printed versions can also be posted physically by students at various locations! (Lorraine has contacts.) Amy can have these ready by the end of January.
- Ad hoc Registration Committee: The group voted on the creation of an ad-hoc committee for registration this year. This group will address any issues that have arisen in the past and work

to make any changes needed to ensure that registration and the reconciliation required afterward are concise, smooth and successful. People can join this group and it should include those who have worked on registration in the past: JW, Angela, Mamie, and possibly Sally. This can be discussed more at the Jan. 21 coordinating meeting.

Education

Lorraine gave an update:

- The RFP deadline is Friday, January 17. The education team will meet and compile their list of workshops to present at the Jan. 21 coordinating meeting. Lorraine estimated that there will be 6 workshops, presented twice (1st and 2nd session.)
- One of the workshops will likely be a panel discussion. It was clarified that there will NOT be a conference-wide panel, but a workshop with a panel discussion.
- Education has been working to procure donations of books for both kids and adults. We have 33 books from Amazon, gift cards from Women and Children first.

Urgent tasks:

- Lorraine mentioned the possibility of having Robert Nevel as a keynote speaker. He is the founder of the MLK Food Justice & Sustainability Weekend at KAM Isaiah Israel. The group felt the idea of having a keynote speaker should be discussed more, and that it's possible he could bring more people to the conference. This can be discussed more at the Jan. 21 coordinating meeting.

Membership

Julie gave an update:

- The group confirmed that we should not have additional membership information at the conference until the final decisions are made. We can have free stuff for people.
- Lorraine added that we have space for 22 vendor/exhibitor tables this year.
- We discussed the fee for vendors/exhibitors and sponsors. It was confirmed that the fee will remain \$50, and if a sponsor (i.e. Openlands) requests a table, the fee will be waived.
- It was suggested that 'premier sponsors' could have tables in the lunch area.
- Everyone supported the idea of having a 'marketplace' this year, and including some vendors who are selling sustainable, meaningful products for gardeners.
- We discussed the possibility of having students involved.
 - May mentioned that she has reached out to the student groups at WYHS and it's possible they could participate, perhaps even in the form of a performance, or maybe to share information at a table.
 - Lorraine added that students from DePaul and UIC will be volunteering at the conference.

Urgent tasks:

- Julie needs to talk to Communications about setting up the exhibitor registration form

- All: Collect garden related 'free stuff' for the membership table - ask working groups

Resources

Lorraine gave an update:

- and reported that at a recent meeting (last Friday), the resources team held a vote and decided that they would not be providing the door prizes for the conference. They are still going to be involved in the conference, but are moving in a new direction.
- They feel that giving people more and more stuff is not sustainable. They are also deeply concerned about sourcing tools and in being mindful of supply chains, were having big challenges with finding sustainable solutions.
- They will provide an enormous amount of seeds! They want to give each participant a generous paper bag of seeds.
- Lorraine asked if people are expecting to receive tools at the conference and if there is something we need to communicate to our attendees?
- Angela and Cordia mentioned that we need to ask ourselves if we want to continue this practice. We are not a "give out tools" organization. We need to become sustainable as an organization and allow organic change to occur.
- Cordia commented when this was brought up that this change is a disruption, we should have known when conference planning started. Angela and Cordia said the door prizes could be covered by other committees if we want to continue this practice are all willing to seek donations.
- Cordia expressed that she felt pretty certain there would be tools if we want to have them. We all have contacts.
- Ellen stopped in briefly and also gave an update: Pat sent an email. Mamie asked her to come to give a better explanation of why they are not doing a swag table. She said it has been terrible as far as logistics, it brings out the worst in people, and buying so much stuff is unenvironmental. The focus is not of stuff that exists already. She thinks it sends the wrong message - we are about hard core gardening!
- We talked about sustainability and making it a focus at CCGA. We need to be mindful of all of our choices.
- Resources will not be providing centerpieces.
- The resources team will be participating in a workshop at the conference, content to be determined.

Urgent tasks:

- Discuss whether CCGA wants to pursue donations for giveaway items at the Jan. 21 meeting. If so, what is the criteria (sourcing, sustainability) and who will be reaching out to donors?
- Discuss ideas about what we would like to include on the tables at the conference at the Jan. 21 coordinating meeting. These could be floral centerpieces or something completely different.

Finance

Angela gave an update:

- Three committees submitted budgets for the conference: Education, Communications and the Ad-hoc Venue & Food committee. She confirmed that the checks were being cut this week.
- She met with NeighborSpace to discuss the fiscal agent fee arrangement. A flat rate may be negotiated so that going forward, CCGA will not have to pay a percentage but a flat fee. She will give an update at the Jan. 21 coordinating meeting. Even if the fee arrangement changes, we will still submit our budgets for the conference in December and receive funds in January to help cover our costs and maximize the ability to place orders early.
- May mentioned that the Friends of the Parks charges a flat fee of \$100 to be a fiscal agent. There was some discussion about reporting to the IRS. May and Angela will discuss this more.
- Mamie shared some sample spreadsheets showing how the budgets and reporting of registrations and income could be organized. Here is a sample:
<https://www.dropbox.com/s/e7jujvpy8xpkkf6/Registration%20v2.pdf?dl=0>
- Angela expressed the desire to have a recording secretary be a part of the finance committee to help create reports that show all of the detail needed for everyone. She has all of the data and needs help creating clean documents.

Sponsorships

We discussed sponsorship developments:

- Cordia mentioned that letters have been sent to Openlands, New Leaf and a few others.
- New Leaf could potentially donate 25 centerpieces.
- Angela and Cordia have been using is the boilerplate sponsorship docs that we created for the 2018 conference. These are on CCGA Google drive and see link below for reference:
<https://www.dropbox.com/sh/qzs19qd088d5jfv/AAAYpPnvMVkXIHS5-ezRs1taa?dl=0>
- We clarified that the sponsorship docs DO NOT have to have the CCGA conference logo. The overall CCGA logo is just fine.
- Who else do we need to reach out to for sponsorships? We need to discuss this at the meeting on Jan. 21.
- We had a discussion about the process of when someone requests their sponsorship to be allocated to a certain aspect of or items for CCGA or the annual conference. When funds are allocated to specific committees, we must keep detailed records both for the donor and our internal reporting.

Venue & Food Ad-Hoc Committee

Angela gave an update:

- We reviewed the budget for the venue. The total cost for the venue will be \$3,345.00. This includes the rental of the building, house area, classrooms, bridge, foyer of academic building, custodian, security and technicians.
- Angela needs the updated Temporary Use Permit form for the playground.
- We can rent 8' tables for \$5 from WYHS. These could be for our registration area or for the vendors. May mentioned that there may be a limited number of tables available. There was some discussion as to whether the exhibitors should be charged \$5 more if they want a table or if CCGA should absorb that cost into the conference expenses. We decided to discuss this more at the Jan. 21 meeting
- She proposed that the caterer for the conference could be Jimbo's, the caterer from the 2019 conference. She expressed that last year, there was a LOT of food given away. Even though the extra food went to the Breakthrough food pantry, logistics were difficult with the hot food. BUT, people gave great feedback! If we go with hot food, we will need to provide the hot trays.
- She asked us to consider a boxed lunch instead of a buffet. For the boxed lunch, we could have 3 choices of sandwiches, plus a vegan and gluten-free option. People could make a selection when they register. There was discussion about having the vegan option be something more interesting than a salad sandwich. Something with mushrooms, peppers, etc. We would set up 3 stations that would be clearly marked. We need to discuss more on Jan. 21.
- There was also a discussion about the waste generated with a hot lunch. We had compostable plates and cutlery last year, but much of what was collected was ultimately thrown in the trash. What can we do to reduce waste? A boxed lunch helps.
- The idea was brought up to provide bamboo utensil sets (used for camping, etc) as our giveaway item. These are quite expensive, so we would have to find a budget-friendly source (likely coming from China) An example: <https://www.to-goware.com/collections/to-go-ware-utensil-sets/products/classic-bamboo-utensil-set>
- Lorraine brought up the idea of having coffee and snack carts available for attendees for between the workshops. This is because the workshops are 75 minutes each and lunch will start 30 minutes later. CCGA would cover the cost for the items on the cart (as well as the breakfast.) It was decided that we would discuss this more on Jan. 21.
- There is a desire by everyone to review the set-up, logistics and food for the conference and make it as close to zero-waste as possible. This means prioritizing recycling and composting and asking attendees to bring their own stuff - drinking vessel, cutlery, bag.

4. Tour of Dining Area, Classrooms & Bridge

We walked around the venue and discussed the flow for the conference. Entering the main academic building requires the attendees to walk from a parking lot. Then there is a walk to the registration area and then up elevators or stairs to the main dining area, classrooms, and bridge. There was discussion about having the vendors located in the dining area in this scenario to bring them closer to the attendees. Although the bridge is a beautiful space, the vendors would seem out of the way and people may miss them.

May mentioned that it could be possible to enter the venue through the Arts Building lobby, which is closer to the parking area. Attendees would register there, then go upstairs to walk across the Bridge (though the vendors) to reach the main dining area and classrooms.

We are able to organize the dining area however we need to.
We decided that we need to create a small ad hoc logistics team.
We will discuss this more at the Jan. 21 meeting.

5. Meeting Summary

The meeting was adjourned at about 3:45pm. These are the items mentioned in this meeting that will need to be discussed further at the Jan. 21 coordinating meeting:

- Conference Chair - vote
- Communications: Presentation of 2020 conference logo ideas & vote
- Education: Report on workshops selected from RFP & vote, Discussion of having keynote speaker
- Finance: Options for fiscal agent fee agreement with NeighborSpace
- Venue & Food: Discuss \$5 table rental, Catering (boxed versus hot lunch), Coffee carts (yes or no), Discussion of flow of space and use of bridge - do we want people to enter from the Arts Building?
- Sponsorship: plan of action!
- Creation of Ad-hoc registration team
- Creation of Ad-hoc logistics team
- Discussion about centerpieces for tables

6. Upcoming Meetings

CCGA monthly coordinating meeting on Tuesday, January 21, from 6:30-8pm, at The Hatchery