

## MRALGA AGM 2022

19/11/2022 Minutes

Trustees present: Maria Moon, (MM Chair), Carol Andrew (CA) David Osborn (DO) David Moon (DM), Cheryl Brittain (CB), Garry Black (GB) and Mark Moore (MaM).

Lisa Muxlow (LM) minute taker.

74 Members attended

The meeting opened at 11 am. Maria Moon welcomed and thanked all members for attending.

A one minute silence was observed to remember all members who have passed away since the last AGM.

The minutes from the 2019 were approved and signed off.

There were no matters arising from the 2019 AGM minutes.

### **Committee Reports:**

#### **Chairs report MM**

Good morning and thank you to you all for attending. As many of you are aware we were unable last year to hold an AGM due to lack of attendees. Before that we had COVID restrictions. So today believe it or not we are signing off AGM minutes from 2019.

Last year both Garry Black and Cheryl Brittain were elected onto the committee as trustees by the rest of the team. They have been an asset to us over the last 12 months and I would like to take this opportunity to thank all of the trustees and volunteers for their continued hard work. This year we would like to welcome Lisa as our Secretary, Lisa has been volunteering in this role since March. As you will see around the room we are always looking for more volunteers, if you think you can give us a few hours of your time please see Mr Oz before leaving today and we will take your contact details.

Moving forward today. Can I please remind everyone that we are a group of volunteers and we would please ask that you remember this when conversing with us and each other. No swearing please and please keep an even temper.

#### **Treasurer's Report**

Our thanks to previous Treasurer Myra Underwood. I took over as treasurer at the end of February. I would also like to thank Lisa Muxlow for coming forward to support with administration and I fully support her nomination to be a trustee.

Also, Amanda Brookes for her dedicated work raising funds for the new Woo woo facility and support to update Equality and Safe guarding policies. Also, a great cake baker.

Vicky Perkins Is our independent Examiner the below was read by CA as Vicky sent apologies and could not attend.

I have now been through your accounts and can advise that I don't have any issues or queries with these. I have not been instructed to carry out an audit or a review of the financial statements of MRALGA, merely independently examine the accounts in accordance with Charity Law to ensure that the correct records are being kept and raise any concerns that I may have.

After examining the accounts, I can confirm the following:

The records being kept are more than adequate, with sufficient detail.

The presentation of the accounts is suitable and in the correct format.

I have no concerns to raise on these accounts.

It is good to see so many projects being done around the site, making it a better site for all.

Vicky sends her apologies as away on her postponed honeymoon. Once I have finalized the Charity commission Report and , Vicky has signed the report will be submitted to the Charity commission and Companies House as legally required and viewable on line.

Please see accounts receipts and expenditure and attached notes

*Questions:*

*Tenant: Please can you tell us why the creature control price has increased?*

*CA: Base stocks this year have been replaced and generally the cost of supplies has risen.*

*Tenant: Do we need to be members of the RHS.*

*CA: As a society we do this so that all the members can from MRALGA can access RHS sites at a reduced rate throughout the year.*

*Tenant: The water bill is the highest its ever been?*

*CA: The site is full to capacity and this year the main growing season was exceptionally hot.*

Proposal to accept the accounts

Proposed Tenants Sam Marco seconded Nigel James.

### **Secretary's report read by Lisa Muxlow:**

I took over as the volunteer Secretary in March as the trustees were short on numbers to be able to do all of the work needed.

Over the 8 months I have been helping out, I have been looking into past processes and ways we can make the role more productive moving forward.

There are a few things that have come to my attention which I would like to put forward for discussion today.

- 1) When taking payments for plots. It has come to my attention that the actual Tenancy rules and regs are returned to us for filing. This will change next year. The invoice pack will be put together slightly differently. Meaning that the signed forms will come into us and the rules and regs will be left in the tenants care. This then means that no tenant can say they did not know what said rules and regs are as they would all be in receipt of a hard copy to keep the hand all year.
- 2) This year we placed a notice on the gate once the invoices were ready for collection. Many tenants still did not come and collect their tenancy's. To just make it clear. Postage this year just to get the tenancies out was over £200. This is a cost that does not need to be incurred. Next year we will not be posting any tenancies. They will be available from show day to collect, which is the 2<sup>nd</sup> of Sept. Any tenancy's not collected and returned by the closing date 9<sup>th</sup> November, those will receive an email /letter posted to say they are now overdue payment and will automatically receive their overdue fine.

When updating the database this year with payments it has been noted that there were 18 address changes and 27 mobile number changes that needed updating. As tenants it is written into the tenancy that these changes should be updated with us as they happen.

Can you imagine if there was a major incident and we could not contact you ...you would not be happy!.

I am happy for any address or telephone numbers to be emailed to [secretary@mralga.org](mailto:secretary@mralga.org) stating plot number and changes.

Regards the face book page which I also man. It would be appreciated if as many tenants as possible could like the page as this will be used moving forward for all important notices and events happening throughout the year. It is a manned page and you can use messenger to contact us if you have any issues throughout the year. Please search events mile road allotments and leisure gardeners association.

Proposal to sign off secretary's report: Silvano Orso, seconded Andy Lyman.

No questions asked.

### **Plot Report read by David Oz**

Maria and myself would like to thank all the plot holders, who have improved their plots over the last 3 years. Over this same period of time approx. a third of the holdings have changed hands to new tenants. Many of which are younger families which is very positive for the future of the site.

We would however ask that any plot holders who now feel they cannot look after their plots come and speak to myself or maria completely confidentially. If the plot holder is not able to attend we will gladly speak with a representative for the family.

Over the last 3 years we have installed a further 4 rain water collection points and are pleased that many plot holders are now harvesting their own rain water in line with the amended tenancy agreement. I remind all holders that if you have a polytunnel or shed on your plot. You need to be harvesting rain water please. If you require blue barrels please ask at the shop and we will endeavour to help you locate some.

The community spirit throughout the pandemic and now continuing is amazing to see when neighbours are helping each other out through spells of ill health.

Even through the pandemic in the last 3 years the association has made clear of 8,000 on the plant sales we have been able to hold. All of the monies raised at this event go back into the funds to improve the site. New security doors, disabled ramps and building repairs.

The 2023 plant sale will soon be upon us and as usual we will be looking for volunteers to help. Planting will take place between March and early May on Thursday and Saturday mornings.

Watering will be daily from April up to the event on the 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>h</sup> may.

If you can spare us a few hours of your time please come and fill in one of my lovely volunteer forms and we can get you added to the list.

The plant sale is not only fantastic for the site. It also enables the wider public to see what we have achieved and enable them to also partake in some purchases.

Id like to thank Tony Matthews for placing the advertising on all the other allotment sites for this event.

Tibbs supporters for their ongoing help.

And Barry Tappenden for his plugs on hospital radio.

*Tenant: Would like it noted that big thanks should be given to the trustees for their continued hard work.*

*DO: Additionally thanks Richard for all his hard work behind the scenes to make the plant sale so successful.*

## **Events Report read by Cheryl Brittain**

After 2 dreary years of lockdown. This year we were able to resume our activity timetable.

In March we held our Mothers Day weekend. Many children took part in the daffodil growing competition and they were given the opportunity to make cards on craft table. The emphasis was to encourage youngsters in the joy of growing and coming together as a group.

Easter weekend was also a great success, the allotment was buzzing with growing, warm weather and great expectations. The children and families enjoyed the easter egg hunt and easter bonnet dressing. There was also a smashing raffle.

In May we held our annual plant sale, this was a great success. The plants were lovingly grown and nurtured by a small team working in the background giving their time and expertise.

In June we held the Platinum Jubilee celebration, we decorated with bunting, had live music, games and a family picnic. In the evening we had a fish and chip supper and quiz.

In September we held our annual show. Sadly, Queen Elizabeth died several days before the event. It was with great consideration and thought that we decided to go ahead. Two minute silence was held prior to the prize giving. The event was well attended and supported. The standard of produce was high making the judging a difficult task. Bedford hospital radio provided gentle music. Dave Moon and the catering team cooked a lovely BBQ. We would like to thank all those tenants that donated to the raffle and tombola and to those who baked cakes for us.

In October we held our Halloween day. This was very popular and many children took part. We decorated the hut for the occasion. Cakes, sweets and warm drinks went down very well. The atmosphere in the hut was warm and lovely.

This year MRALGA have been invited to St Pauls Church in Bedford to decorate a Christmas tree. This is an annual event where local organisations and charities come together. This years theme is popular musicals. We have chosen Mary Poppins. You will be able to visit from the 30<sup>th</sup> Nov- 4<sup>th</sup> Dec. All are welcome to make a decoration related to gardening or Mary Poppins to hang on the tree.

December, we are busy planning for our xmas get together, this will be held on December 10<sup>th</sup> with a special visit from father Christmas. There will be a raffle, Tombola and activities for the children.

We are eager for everyone to get involved and would welcome volunteers help.

We have started planning next years events so please keep an eye on the notice boards and posters around the site.

*Tenant: Can we please thank the events team for all their hard work*

*CB: excepts thanks.*

## **Move to proposals from tenants:**

The Trustees have received 2 formal proposals for the AGM.

### **Jake Sale rent increase proposal**

Read by Maria Moon in the absence of Jake Sale. Jake sent his apologies.

Automatic Annual rent increase

Given the bureaucracy, time and surrounding issues of the committee proposing to raise the rent every few years. I am proposing we introduce a small automatic annual increase to happen every year. This way everyone knows what to expect, there is no big song and dance about it or fears of a drastic price jump. We would have a slow gradual and managed rent increase inline with how other things happen in the rest of society.

I propose for the next 3yrs the rent on a full plot by £2 a year. How this affects a smaller plot I would propose pro rata. How this affects any discount I would also propose is pro rata.

At the end of this 3 year period the success can be reviewed and voted on again moving forward.

*No questions raised by Tenants*

*Unanimous vote by all of those attending to also include 14 proxy votes.*

### **Silvano Orso abolishment of bonfires**

Proposed abolishment of Bonfires at MRALGA site. Silvano read his proposal and supporting documentation.

Questions:

*Tenant: Questions that he has never had issues in 6yrs as a tenant and yet he has asthmatic children.*

*Tenant: That if we did not burn then we would be paying £420 a month for skips. These would be abused on site which would end in fines. The rent would have to be increased dramatically if we moved to skips.*

*Tenant: Blight cannot be composted, white onion rot cannot be composted.*

*Tenant: If someone is burning and not adhering to the rules what do the trustees do?*

*MM: We immediately extinguish the fire and a letter is written to the tenant. As trustees in the past we have actually banned tenants from burning.*

*Tenant: The green waste bins are no longer emptied sept-march by the council so we cannot take green waste home.*

*Tenant: Big cuttings that will not compost need to be burned.*

*Tenant: Could we not change burning from sept-march only?*

*MM: We have already moved from weekly to monthly burning.*

*Tenant: I have been here 30yrs plus. If we are going to limit the months we burn. Can we have a communal area for rubbish awaiting burning?*

*MM: We have stopped all communal waste/compost areas as they are constantly abused.*

*Silvano Orso: Puts forward additional argument, consideration points.*

*GB: reads the response from the trustees*

Whilst we understand that there are differing views across the site. We believe that the rules we have in place around bonfires on site. Have worked and will continue to work.

This last year we have received NO complaints from surrounding residents regarding our bonfire policy. We are aware that local residents have had their doors knocked and asked to sign a generic letter. To confirm any resident who comes to us directly we will liaise with directly. We as a group of trustees do not think it the correct thing to do to cold call on our neighbours.

The tenancy clearly states burning on the first weekend only and in a metal bin. This year the 2 tenants that have abused this rule have been contacted directly.

The burning on site should be waste only that cannot be composted. IE potatoes and tomatoes plants once they are finished for the season. Any other green waste that would not compost.

Ash from burning should then be used to regenerate into the soil. Which we have seen being the case on many occasions.

Should we agree to the proposal we ask this. How are the tenants disposing of waste that walk or cycle here? Or live in flats? Are we as a committee expected to supply skips for green waste? To confirm the cost of this would be in excess of 1500 for the year. Who is going to make sure that the skip is not incorrectly used?

We take bonfires very seriously this year when we were in the middle of a heat wave we banned bonfires for safety reasons and as we were aware many local residents would be in their gardens. Every single tenant complied with our request.

On average we have across the site 4 or 5 bonfires on the allocated bonfire weekend. They are not burning all day and the tenants supervise their burning.

To confirm we do not agree with this proposal as trustees and would move for a decision to continue with one burning weekend to be the first weekend of the month, with no fires on event days or when the weather is dry.

We would now ask for a 4 or against vote?

Vote

15 tenants agree to the proposal

59 tenants disagree with the proposal plus 14 proxy voters.

GB: agrees the trustees will take on board the possibility in the future of sept-march burning only.

### **MM: AOB**

Nothing raised Maria thanks all of those attending

meeting closed 12noon.