

MONTPELIER SQUARE GARDEN COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF ANNUAL RESIDENTS MEETING

Date: Monday 28th March 2011

Held at: Montpeliano Restaurant

Committee Members Present:

Mr. Daniel Quirici
Lady Marshall
Mr. Yoshi Nishio
Mr. Neil Carthy
Mr. Ali Malek
Mrs. Jane Bradbury
Mrs. Avril Cox
Mr. Nicholas Davie-Thornhill
Mrs. Anica Nishio

Members of the Association present: Lord Marshall, Mrs. Kate Al Rahbani, Mrs. Ilaria Tosato, Mr. and Mrs. David Eckhardt.

Apologies were received from Mr. Christopher Didizian

To Consider the Minutes and Matters Arising

Mr. Daniel Quirici welcomed new members to the Committee – Mrs. Anica Nishio and Mr. Neil Carthy. He thanked David Eckhardt for his work on the Committee as he has decided to stand down from the Committee. He stated new procedures have been adopted to make the Association more transparent. He said it is a fine balance as it is not a charity but it needs the discipline of a corporation to manage the money.

The Minutes of the Annual General Meeting held on 25th January 2010 were approved by Lord Marshall and seconded by Mr. Yoshi Nishio and signed by Mr. Daniel Quirici.

Lady Marshall, Garden Chairman's Report

Lady Marshall reported another year of minimum expenditure. However the garden has continued to mature and looks good. It was entered into the London Squares Competition and with help from members with a pre-judging tidy up, was awarded a Highly Commended classification.

Major tree pruning has just finished. Westminster City Council control the trees and all work was done with their consent. It is hoped that no further major tree work will be necessary this year.

The lighting programme was completed with the installation of fixtures to cover two further trees on the South side.

Honey fungus re-appeared by both gates. Diseased plants will be removed and replaced with holly.

Spike Jackson, our contractor for the past twenty years, has moved to Cambridge and no longer wishes to continue. His contract ends on March 31st. David Eckhardt and Lady Marshall interviewed a selection of prospective new contractors and recommended to the Committee that Robert Player of Garden Associates be appointed. This was approved and he starts on April 1st.

Mr Player has wide experience of London Square garden maintenance, comes highly recommended and has an excellent record. He employs a team of fifteen experienced gardeners and does no private work. It must be expected that he will want to make changes and improvements to the garden which will incur additional expenditure.

The signs on the garden gates need attention. This will be done when a suitable signwriter is available, together with discreet signs to stop bicycles being chained to the railings which damages the paintwork.

Westminster City Council are anxious that a further two well grown new London Planes be planted on the North side. After a two to three year period when the new trees should be well established WCC will reconsider removal of a Plane tree from the south side. After much discussion it was agreed that Elm trees would be preferable to Planes although some residents would prefer less trees altogether. The subject of trees will be discussed at the next Committee meeting.

Mr. Yoshio Nishio, Treasurer's Report and Presentation of Accounts

The accounts were prepared by Mr. Neil Carthy and Mr. David Eckhardt. Mr. Yoshi Nishio reported the garden costs approximately £25,000 per annum to maintain and it is planned to have a similar amount as a reserve to cover any unforeseen expenditures of any kind. Each house pays £950 pa, so by the end of next year the reserve should reach £25,000 and after that the Precept should be able to be reduced significantly. Financially the Association is in good shape and compared with other squares Montpelier is very competitive with costs being quite low. However, Lady Marshall reported there is a hidden cost of £860 +VAT for suspending the parking bays each time the trees have to be pruned, but she has discussed this with Westminster CC and hopes this may be refunded. Mr. David Eckhardt asked if the garden could be VAT exempt if they are considered an extension of the houses as they are now 'listed' – this will be looked into by the Secretary contacting the local VAT office.

The Precept for two houses not presently paying (Nos. 14 and 4?) was discussed: it was agreed they will be asked to pay if they have and are using their keys or they will have to return their key. Only people who pay the Precept are allowed to use the garden.

Report by Mr. Ali Malek on Garden Byelaws and Rules of Procedure

The Garden Byelaws which were drawn up in the 19th century have to be approved by a Judge, so the Committee, which is made up of up to 9 members and therefore a good representation, has decided it is time to come up with something modern, i.e. the 13 basic rules on the new Byelaws document.

The Rules of Procedure of the Committee sets out how the Committee is run and is a living document that can be revised by the Committee at any time and does not need to be approved by a Judge. It will be discussed at the next Committee Meeting. If people wish to be kept informed of any proceedings, they should supply their email address as at present the

Secretary reported she does not have all of them. Mr. David Eckhardt suggested that residents should have access to a website in case some people do not wish to supply their email address and to avoid information having to be distributed round the square. Mr. Neil Carthy will look into the cost of a website which could have a Members Only section so that it is not entirely public.

Mr. Ali Malek and Mr. David Eckhardt were thanked for their work on these documents.

Date for next Annual Residents Meeting: Monday 26th March 2012

Any Other Business

Mrs. Avril Cox asked about the issue of the new lights with regard to Health & Safety. Lady Marshall stated the cables are buried in the most part, they have a heavy duty covering and each light has a safety switch so if anything attacks or disturbs the cables it immediately comes into operation. There has been no problem with any of the other lights. However it was agreed that a Health & Safety Officer, possibly from Westminster CC free of charge, should check that they are all in order. The contractor who supplied the lights suggested a maintenance contract be set up, so Lady Marshall has asked for a quote. Mrs. Avril Cox is unhappy with the lights shining directly into her house and requested the lights be turned off by 11 pm each night – this was agreed until Mrs. Avril Cox and Mr. David Eckhardt can arrange for the lighting contractor and an independent consultant to come at night to assess the whole problem of the lights.

Mrs. Kate Al Rahbani reported a man has been seen in the square saying there are going to be new keys to the garden and residents need to pay £30 for a new one; he is also offering access to other gardens in London with tennis courts etc. This is a bogus offer and the keys are not being changed, so residents need to beware. Lady Marshall has reported the man to the Police.

The meeting ended at about 8 PM with thanks to Mr. Daniel Quirici for chairing it.