

Community Garden Meeting
Thursday, March 10, 2011
Wissahickon Boys & Girls Club
328 W. Coulter St.

- 1) Kathy Paulmier introduced herself to the attendees. She explained that she is a member of Germantown Meeting (Quakers), and that the tennis court garden lot is owned by Germantown Meeting and Germantown Friends. The lot, maintained by two neighboring families, had not seen use for 20 years. The Garden Group at the Meeting decided to start a neighborhood garden there 2 years ago. In a similar way to the beautiful restoration and renovation of Cloverly Park, the Meeting would like to rehabilitate the garden lot as a community garden where interested gardeners can grow food and have friendly interactions.
- 2) About 25 attenders, including 8 Garden Group members, introduced themselves. They live mostly nearby but some live several blocks away. Each explained their interest in attending the meeting. The introductions helped all of those present to start a new community spirit. Those present put their names and contact information on the sign-up sheet. This will allow Garden Group to send out announcements about the garden workdays.
- 3) The garden is called the Old Tennis Court Farm. Community gardens are gaining momentum all over the world and especially here in the US. Urban farming serves several purposes; it renovates vacant lots, it promotes sustainability and growing nutritious food locally.
- 4) Kathy explained that the Old Tennis Court Farm is on Wissahickon Ave, between Cloverly Park and the School Lane House Apartments parking lot. Most of the lot is an old dilapidated tennis court, but around the edge are planted fruit-bearing shrubs and trees. Several large deciduous trees also stand near the edge of the lot. There are some shadows from the trees and from the SLH Apartments across Wissahickon Ave. However the entire garden area has plenty of sunlight.
- 5) The plots will initially be 12' x 12', for a fee of \$30 for the season. The plots can be subdivided and they can also be shared among a family, several individuals, a school class, or an organization such as a church congregation.
- 6) The Garden Group grew vegetables last year in a small plot at the edge of the asphalt. It was very successful and bountiful tomatoes, peppers, squash, and basil were harvested. The soil was tested and found to be quite clean with extremely low levels of contaminants. The soil underneath the tennis courts contains gravel and some glass-like cinders that are not harmful and can be screened out. Below the gravel sits a loamy clay soil. The Garden Committee will provide screens and advice on how to remove stones from the soil, and will also provide compost for the plots and wood chips for the paths between. Gardening advice will also be available for beginners. There will of course be more work the first year to construct plots and dig in compost. In later years, the previous year's plots will require less work.
- 7) The lot has 3 tennis courts. The garden area will be in the asphalt cleared from the first tennis court, and next year the Garden Committee plans to remove the asphalt from the second tennis court, and so on for the next 2 years when the entire area will be for the garden. There are 2 stone access stairways leading up from the SLH parking lot. The plan is to start a small garden this first year, and learn from this experience, so that next year the garden will run smoothly.

8) Parking is available in the SLH parking lot during the daytime hours as long as the lot is not mostly full. This is a special arrangement with SLH, and it is subject to change. The parking lot usually has adequate free space during the summer months.

9) There is an access ramp from the SLH parking lot up to the tennis court garden. The access is through 2 gates which can be opened by Garden Committee members.

10) The Mission Statement for the Old Tennis Court Farm is:

The Old Tennis Court Farm is established by Germantown Monthly Meeting in the tradition of Quakers to grow food, promote sustainable living, and nurture friendly interactions among neighbors. This urban farm is intended to encourage a shared vision of a splendid green space.

11) The garden plots can be utilized by neighborhood residents, either individual or in groups, by school classes, and by organizations such as church congregations. Some of the plots are reserved for Germantown Meeting and Germantown Friends School. School classes will utilize some of the plots for curriculum. There will also be some common space.

12) Water is available from water storage barrels on the side of the plot. The water is non-potable, and is not for drinking. The water comes from a 120' well and is currently being tested. The water is pumped by a solar panel. Drinking water must be brought by gardeners for their own use.

13) There will be no fence in this first year, but a 4' fence is planned when funding becomes available. A shed will be located near the well on the side of the lot near Cloverly Park.

14) The rules of the Old Tennis Court Farm will be similar to the rules for other neighborhood gardens. They are relatively simple; gardeners must use their plot, keep it weed-free, and help out with workdays and attend meetings during the summer.

15) An orientation meeting at the Old Tennis Court Farm will be on Saturday April 2 at 10 AM. At that meeting gardeners can be sign up for a plot and plots can be assigned.

16) The Old Tennis Court Farm Garden Committee will be organized around Quaker decision-making process. In this customary method, individuals take the groups wisdom and make an effort to listen, to come to a common "sense of the meeting" about a decision. Individuals also respect those with more experience. In this way the group can move forward without voting. If someone cannot agree with a decision, they can "step aside", with their opinion written down as not coinciding with the group's decision. The Garden Committee will initially consist of Meeting Garden Group members, but these may be joined by committed gardeners.

17) There was a discussion of concerns and questions. The Garden Committee will try to pay attention to keeping the garden in good order. Gardeners will be able to construct raised beds. The garden will be open to anyone who has a genuine interest in gardening. Those without experience can join with others to garden in a plot, and a plot can be subdivided. If many people ask for plots this first year, the Garden Committee may decide to subdivide plots to 6' or 4' wide. This would allow easy access without requiring a path to go through a plot. The \$30 fee for a 12' x 12' plot will be subdivided according to the size of the plot.

18) A question was raised about the screened stones and gravel. The Garden Committee currently has put the stones in a pile in the corner of the tennis courts, but has discussed utilizing the gravel in

the paths. Wood chips will be available for the paths, but this may require more weeding. A compost pile will be available but non-compostable trash will require some method for removal. Work tools will be available for workdays.

19) The garden will "start small" and the Garden Committee will learn from the first year's experience. Many of the resources are donated, for example, the trucking to haul compost is being donated. Initially the Garden Committee distributed flyers in the 4-block area surrounding the Tennis Court Farm. There will be a bulletin board on the back of the sign at the front of the Tennis Court Farm.

20) Gardening activity will stop at dusk. At night, there is light from the SLH parking lot, and there will be security lights on the shed.

21) The meeting ended with Quaker customary practice of a moment of silence and then shaking of hands.