

District 6 meeting April 18, 2020

9am held electronically on Zoom, hosted by District Director Catherine McGill

Attendance - 47 (names have been recorded)

1. Meeting called to order by Cat McGill, District 6 Director, at 9:05 AM
2. Original Purpose - Postponement of District 6 Annual General Meeting(AGM) and elections. The motions to postpone the meeting and elections is no longer necessary at this meeting as the as Government of Ontario has passed emergency legislation that allows for our AGM and elections to be postponed until 90 days after the declared end of the COVID-19 virus pandemic. This postponement will not impact OHA insurance or OMAFRA grants. This legislation overrules our constitution and by-laws.

Catherine reported that while the July OHA Convention in London has not officially been cancelled at this date but doesn't look promising. New purpose of this meeting is to discuss fund-raising and member activity ideas, maintaining and increasing society membership and problem solving of other issues brought forward by the societies.

3. Meetings

District 6 AGM

The District 6 AGM will be held on Sat., September 19, 2020, in Simcoe. The Breakfast Meeting on this date will include the District 6 AGM and elections and a flower and photography show put on by Georgetown honouring Georgetown's 100th anniversary.

Society General Meetings, Society Executive Meetings

Electronic Meetings

We need to encourage and educate all societies on moving forward with electronic meetings. Zoom is free for 30-40 minutes but two meetings can easily be held back-to back to provide an hour-long meeting. Alternatively a Zoom package can be purchased on a monthly basis for \$20. Lianne Krane (Milton)-Hosting a Zoom a meeting or two back-to back meetings is cheaper than hiring a hall and may become the new norm for executive meetings.

Virtual reality, FaceBook & Zoom can be used to post personal garden tours to keep membership engaged.

4. Plant Sales:

Strategies for plant sales should be put in place immediately as these are the primary society fundraisers.

St. George (Shirley Steedman) - have created an order form to be circulated for her society for flats of annuals. The society will fill orders and contact purchasers for curb-side pick-up. If drop-offs are offered they need to be construed as an essential service, i.e., include food.

Some plant sales will continue as they are on private land with lots of space.

One society is having a virtual plant sale.

Members can split plants now and offer them for member or community curb-side sale

Greenhouses and nurseries will have sales issues. They will have seeds, vegetables and some plants available for sale and curb-side pickup. To increase their sales they should be agreeable to partnering with societies for discounts.

Some societies are planning to put pots at the side of road and ask for free-will offerings or donations.

Paula Clayton: Oakville -will hold a fall plant sale and focus on trees, shrubs, bulbs. Members will divide plants now and post them on the Oakville website to share or sell to other members. Freewill offerings will regularly bring more money than at normal plant sales.

5. Membership/Membership Activities

To keep membership up societies must offer value for the price of membership that is both useful and accessible to members during the pandemic.

Facebook pages can be used to keep members apprised of activities. Post events and activities.

Continue to send newsletters but include more: recipes, offer plant swaps, you want to be beefing up your newsletters to give extra value to your membership as you can't have meetings.

Create partnerships with service companies such as, hardscaping, lawn service, other garden service, or horticultural companies that will provide a discount to members in return for advertising. Invite potential partners to join a society Zoom meeting. Nurseries will partner to get their word out. Offer these discounts to your membership as value-added. This enforced down time is a good opportunity to work with membership at what they are good at and could share with members. Record a virtual garden tour and hold n on-line watch party. Other examples of activities to put on line

- Have members keep a bloom log or plant ID.

- Teach how to create a line design. Have participants make a design and send a picture from which to create a virtual show for members. Do an album and have a vote on the best design.

- Create and advertise a closed-to-members group and offer interesting segments on a weekly basis. If this is advertised well it will bring new paying members in.

- Videos: Could be a baking segment, preserving (pickles), lily beetle control, crafts etc. E.g., of a video: "How to make rhubarb leaf stepping stones".

Bob Heil suggested that District 6 might offer a bi-weekly on-line segment: recipes, propagating etc... Regular virtual meetings will get people involved; provide training, education, and entertainment. Such an internet page, with an advertised schedule of topics, will work to both increase and retain membership. Each society could be responsible to create a segment. "Webinar", a slide presentation with live voice is another option for airing these segments. Zoom can also be used to create videos.

Elizabeth Schleicher-(Burlington) Many older members have retired to condos. Topics specific to those members need to include a well - house plants, balcony and container gardens

FaceBook page - many members do not know how to use the FaceBook or are afraid to try. Some societies may not have members who would know how to put a segment together. This is an opportunity for people to learn how to do this. Prediction for the end of the pandemic could be 12 months therefore we need to educate ourselves and our members.

Mt Hamilton has a private Facebook group and considered paying their march speaker and putting the presentation on line. This would require a signed release by the speaker.

Liz Chapple (Stoney Creek) - UTube has segments on “everything”. Perhaps societies or the District could just provide the links. Other members felt that local speakers would be more beneficial to us as they would be specific to our climate zone. Liz also mentioned that garden tours from all over the world are available on UTube.

Veronica - suggested there may be a possibility for District 6 to create their own video channel on UTube. She does not know how to use UTube to do this but could do some research.

Legal concerns:

- Professional speakers cannot be recorded unless they sign a release form as public speaking is their money maker. Without a signed release form there is the possibility of litigation.
- Videos - No children can appear in videos without specific parental signatures on release forms. Such forms are available under the Youth section of the gardenontario.org website

Ideas for Increasing Membership (as in-person sign-up at meetings is not happening.)

Harriet Henry - Bronte - newsletter editor. Societies should offer more and different ideas and activities in society newsletter. Include useful lists of contacts for garden centres, nurseries, and food delivery services. Paying members receive the newsletter; this acts as another reason to join the society.

-Offer a two-year membership for the price of one, this idea has the downfall of having to pay for Oha dues in the second year and no money coming in to cover this.

-Offer free membership with \$20 worth of plant sales.

-OHA membership fees may go up by approximately \$1. Societies should increase their membership fees every three years as OHA fees, insurance and hall rental costs go up. Currently some society membership fees average out to \$1.50 per meeting. A Horticultural society membership averages \$20 per year compared to a quilting guild with a \$500 per year membership fee.

6. Community Allotment Gardens

These have officially been closed, posted and gated gardens locked. A petition has been started in Ontario to have these gardens opened. The OHA, for legal reasons, cannot take the lead on this issue. Individual societies should draft a letter to send to their Township requesting the opening of these gardens. The letter should be accompanied by a good explanation of the reasoning behind the request...

Cities have not been able to by-pass the regulations. Permission to work in community gardens must be acquired and put in place along with enforce schedules to assure social distancing is maintained.

7. Contracted rental fees

Trudy Bliedung, (Flamborough) Should societies continue to pay rental fees for halls they are not using? The rental halls may have their own policy. It was suggested that if the facility has not cancelled the meetings, the society should pay some part of the fee so they can continue pay their bills also. Mt Hamilton checked their contract and learned that while not obligated to pay by the contract they decided to donate what they could afford to the church, in this case 50% of the fee.

8. Other

Shirley Steedman (St George) requested ideas for celebrating their 100th anniversary in 2021.

Forthcoming suggestions included:

- an anniversary dinner,
- arranging to have a special Day Lily or Hosta hybridized and named for the society,
- the creation of an anniversary garden.

Ancaster has 50 bud vases for the taking if someone would like them.

Cat asked every society to send her their newsletters and items, articles or announcements they would like posted on the District 6 Facebook page.

Feedback: This meeting was fun, well received and worthwhile. 47 members attended on line.

Meeting ended by Catherine McGill at 10:28 AM

Attendance

Acton; Audrey Lee, Alison Crawley

Ancaster; Bob Wilt, Tonie Wilt

Brantford: Heather Kovacic

Bronte: Greg Laws, Harriet Henry

Burlington: Sandi Remedios, Elizabeth Schleicher, Helmut Schleicher

Delhi - Donna Koncir

Flamborough - Trudy Bliedung, Tina Coverly

Georgetown: Jo MacLean, Carol Mathison

Glen Morris; Margaret Fleury, Marion Morton

Haldimand; Catherine McGill, Doreen Scott, Elsie Eubanks, Erene de Siva, Sharon Slack

Lynden: Barb Bell

Milton: Lianne Krane, Anne Eadie, Jennifer Mirosoilin

Mount Hamilton: Kathy Spiwak

Oakville: Marie Decker, Paula Clayton, Veronica Heiderich, Wade Pitman

Paris: Dave Collins, Nancy Burkholder

Port Dover/Woodhouse: Stephanie Wilson, Eleanor Chithalen, Janet Lala

St. George; Shirley Steedman, Judy Bisch, Jenny Lynn Bisch, Edith Stone

Simcoe: Helen Uren Sarah Judd

Stoney Creek: Liz Chapple, Marian Heil, Bob Heil, Judy Wrobel, Karen Krasko

Waterford: Cheryl Murphy

Winona: Helene Brule-Besner, Joy Brunel