



GROSVENOR

Minutes

Belgrave Square Garden Committee
12 May 2010 – 08.30 am
Seaford House, 37 Belgrave Square, London

Present:

Committee: Mary Regnier-Leigh (Chair) (MRL)
Lord Ballyedmond (EB)
Amanda Bond-Elliott (ABE)
Jenny Cleaver (JC)
Andrew Gordon-Lennox (AGL)
Julie Wetherell (JW)
Caroline Lister (CL)
Olga Kennedy (KE)

Grosvenor: Nigel Hughes (NAH)
Stephen Smith (SS)
Kathryn Samuels (Sec) (KS)

Apologies: Lawton Fage (LF)
Helen Oratore (HO)

Minutes copied to: All attendees and apologies
Belgrave Square Gardens website
Belgrave Square Garden noticeboard

Action

1.0 Introductions

1.1 MRL welcomed KE as a new committee member.

2.0 Minutes of previous meeting

2.1 The minutes of the previous meeting were agreed.

3.0 Chairman's report

3.1 MRL asked if any of the committee had any points they wished to raise with her. There were none.

4.0 Landscape Manager's report

4.1 SS reported that a new Charge Gardener has been appointed for BSG. Martin Hutchinson has five year's experience and is due to take up employment in early June. JC asked where he had worked previously and SS advised that he is coming from Chessington.

5.0 Budget – inner paths and tennis court

5.1 SS advised that £7,500.00 of the money budgeted for the new inner path would now have to be used for resurfacing the tennis court as previously agreed. He asked what the

- committee would like to use the rest of the budget for if it is not used for the paths.
- 5.1 LF stated that garden users pushing push chairs across the grass on the east side of the garden rather than using the path was cutting a passage across the grass and suggested knee high wooden fencing. AGL pointed out that the garden was there for the pleasure of key holders and suggested that it would be simpler, more convenient and more pleasurable to allow people to use these desire paths. EB felt that maintaining the grass areas was important and did not want to see paths cutting through it. JW asked if children running across the grass were having the same effect and it was agreed that this was not a problem, the problem came from the concentrated wear from pushchairs. MRL said that although fencing was not desirable, a solution was needed to keep pushchairs on the path to ensure the garden's appearance is maintained for all garden users. She suggested that the fencing need not be knee high; even lower fencing would stop pushchairs. JC suggested metal fencing would look less rustic. A vote was taken and all agreed that fencing should be erected to keep pushchairs on the path. SS to investigate materials. SS
- 6.0 Garden party report from the sub-committee**
- 6.1 ABE reported that with 200 tickets now been sold, sufficient attendance figures have now been reached to warrant hiring a tent. The new attendance target is 250 – 300 guests. 300 will bring the party in close to budget. ABE
- 6.2 MRL stated that keys would need to be held in the garden to the padlocked gates. NAH suggested using combination padlocks instead with all committee members and security being briefed on the combination. SS to source. SS
- 6.3 It was agreed that AGL should take a commanding role regarding security and instruct the Ghurkhas.
- 6.4 ABE said a toilet sign would need to be placed on the southern side of the tennis court. SS to provide signage from the Garden Department. SS
- 6.5 MRL advised that the decision had been taken not to take out insurance. The caterers are covered under their own policy.
- 6.6 MRL asked for notices to go up around the garden at least a week before the party advising that the garden would be closed to avoid disappointment. ABE suggested closing the garden from 3.00pm to allow the Raj tent company to set up. This was agreed. NH asked that the notices be placed inside the gates. KS to organise. KS
- 6.7 ABE is to meet with SS to agree on the locations for the four Grosvenor tents. These will need to be put up before the Raj tent. ABE to contact SS after liaising with Mosimann's. ABE/SS
- 6.8 MRL asked for volunteers to meet and greet guests. KE, CL, JC and ABE volunteered and it was agreed that three volunteers would stay on the gate and one or two would guide guests to the central area.
- 6.9 The next sub-committee meeting is scheduled for Tue 1 June at 4.30pm. ABE will have a more accurate idea of attendance numbers by then and will discuss a couple additional ideas if numbers are sufficient.
- 6.10 MRL thanked ABE for her continuing hard work.
- 7.0 Christmas tree**
- 7.1 ABE asked whether the committee would consider having a Christmas tree in the garden this year. SS had no objections but pointed out that the tree would need to be placed near an electrical point and a 30 foot tree, delivered, erected and dressed was likely to be around £4000.00. SS advised that it was easier to buy new lights each year rather than retest and reuse.
- 7.2 ABE said that some clubs ask for contributions for Christmas lights. NAH pointed out that the committee had just missed asking with the annual renewals but it is something that could be considered next year.
- 7.3 EB asked whether the purpose of the tree would be to make the Belgrave area look more Christmassy or to benefit the garden users. He felt that any decorations should have a general benefit and should be seen from outside the garden.
- 7.4 ABE said that the Cadogan Estate had used blue up lighting last year which was very effective and more permanent. SS to make enquiries. SS

8.0 Outer paths

8.1 SS is still waiting for various reports. MRL advised that the paths had settled more and were better than they had been.

9.0 Tennis court and dog waiting lists

9.1 KS reported that the tennis court waiting list had reached over 100 and dealing with calls relating to this was taking up a lot of time. Only three people had moved off the list in 2009 and garden users frequently complained that they were being held on the list whilst the court was frequently empty. In addition, there was now a dog waiting list. KS

9.2 NAH advised that in previous years, residents on the waiting list had been allowed to apply for winter tennis membership which had alleviated the dissatisfaction. This had not been offered in 2009/2010 but would be offered again from September 2010. ABE suggested offering peak and off peak membership.

9.3 NAH clarified that residents of Belgrave Square have an automatic right to use the tennis court and do not have to join the waiting list. The waiting list applies to outside users only. EB pointed out the importance of ensuring residents of Belgrave Square had regular access to the court.

9.5 MRL asked for this item to be put on the agenda for the next meeting by which time the success of the online booking system can be assessed. Two conflicting reports are regularly received, one that the court is always empty, the other that members are unable to book the court. KS to provide usage reports when available. KS

10.0 Mound – how to develop (tunnel / seats / trees)

10.1 ABE suggested bidding for an elephant, adding a sculptural element back to the top of the mound. MRL asked NH to check prices and report back. EB felt that the original sculpture on loan had been a success and could be investigated again. NH

10.2 AGL pointed out that it was too late to add tunnels. They should have been added when the mound was originally built.

10.3 A tree was discussed. SS pointed out that a tree is permanent. AGL suggested a tree in a pot which would then be less permanent, possibly with seating around it.

10.4 SS advised that seating had not been followed up because the soil had needed to settle. Seating cut into the mound or around a central feature could now be considered.

10.5 A path over the mound was dismissed because children would be likely to run over it.

10.6 EB suggested flowers. SS said that the original idea was to plant a spire of flowers but this was impractical due to the heavy garden usage.

10.7 MRL liked the idea of inset seats and asked SS to obtain advice on the ideas discussed from the Landscape Agency. SS

11.0 Playground – children numbers

11.1 MRL read extracts from a letter sent by a nanny who wanted to see cricket played in the garden with an emphasis on fewer restrictions for children and highlighted a letter from another resident who wanted to see dogs being less restricted in the garden. This highlighted the need to balance the needs of different garden users and ensure that one group do not change the nature of the garden. EB agreed and said that it was important to be mindful of the people living on Belgrave Square.

11.2 ABE said that children had been reported bringing sizable numbers of friends who are not garden members into BSG. JW confirmed that “play dates” went on but did not think large numbers of members did this. ABE said that she had encountered groups letting in friends and felt it was problematic, especially at weekends when garden usage was heavy. JC confirmed seeing people without fobs waiting at the gate to be let in or leave their children with someone inside. JW felt that the committee needs to tread carefully and distinguish between people who abuse the system and those who may invite friends on one or two occasions. MRL asked the Garden Department to look at the statistics of key usage to see if anyone was clearly abusing the system. KS/SS

11.3 ABE asked if Eaton Square or Chester Square would consider opening up garden usage to

outside members or building a playground to take the pressure off BSG. NAH suggested a meeting of the Chairs to discuss this. AGL asked if there would be Grosvenor funding for a playground in another garden and NAH confirmed that there would.

- 11.4 MRL said that a review is needed to see how abuse of membership can be prevented. NAH said that Grosvenor had always been reluctant to restrict membership or enforce a no guest policy.

12.0 AOB

- 12.1 Committee members volunteered to help on Open Day on Sun 13 June.
Morning – KE and LF
Afternoon – MRL and ABE

13.0 Date of next meeting

Tue 8 June – 5.00pm