

EATON SQUARE GARDEN AGM

Held on 6 February 2008

At 5.00pm at St Michael's Church, London, SW1

Attendees:

Committee

G Waite (Chair) (GW)
Simon Davie (SD)
Barbara Pederson
Tina Kokalj

Grosvenor

Nigel Hughes (NAH)
Stephen Smith (SS)
Chris Anderson (CA)
John Clark (JC)
Lesley Buchan (LB)

Residents

Mrs Freeman
Jodie Waldron
Debbie Kook
Mrs Lemos
Mrs Dimitriev

Apologies:

Felicity Donald	Princess Galitzine	Lady Bristol
Mr and Mrs P J Carroll	Mrs B Lomnitz	Mr and Mrs Archer
Petana Limited	Mrs H Bloomfield	Mr and Mrs Hilton
Fidius Services Ltd	Ms E Dobbs	Mr H Sofer and Mr D Craig
Mrs A I Campbell	Mr and Mrs Nishiwaki	Mr and Mrs Deily
Mr and Mrs Senouf	Mr H Marks	Ms R Lawther
Mr R A Osterrieth	Mrs C Levy	Mrs S Blaug
Eton House Estate Ltd	Remus Holdings Limited	Mr B Bonas
Great Will Limited	Sunrise Properties Ltd	Baroness Rawlings
Lady Jane Dawnay	Eaton Compania Armadora SA	
Montana Investment Corporation		
The Right Hon Lady Lever of Manchester		

ACTION

1. Previous minutes of AGM held on 30 January 2007

1.1 The previous minutes were accepted.

2. Grosvenor report

2.1 SS made the following points about the Gardens:

- Two Ailthanus fell in the garden on 18 January and a third had to be felled because it was dangerous. They were cleared and replanted in February and the borders will be done by the end of March
- The NE and SE gardens were mulched as planned
- The Open Day was very successful and well supported
- Two parties have been held so the marquees that the committee purchased have already paid for themselves
- The Fountain Garden (south central) received a Highly

- Commended certificate
- The suggestion of a more permanent vegetable garden is being reviewed
- Maintenance continued through the gardens including tree pruning, starting in the NW garden - canopies thinned, some felled etc
- The areas around the benches were planted up to bring additional colour and there were additional tulips added in the autumn
- Chris Anderson and Tony Carthy continue to maintain and improve the gardens, assisted by Hamilton Periotto, Maria Precedo and Lesley Buchan

3. Chairman's report

3.1 The Chairman's report is attached at the end of these minutes.

3.2 Open Day - GW advised that the open day is held every June and coincides with the BRA summer party which Eaton Square host. The BRA used to contribute to the cost of the marquee which used to be rented. Last year the committee purchased some marquees and the cost of these has already been recouped from the parties.

As the marquees are put up for the open day, it is not felt to be an inconvenience to allow other people to use them, but it is not the intention to make this a commercial enterprise.

It would be helpful to circulate information about the marquees to the residents to inform that the marquees will be up for 7-10 days and will be available for their use.

NAH/FG

SD advised that the open day this year would be on 8 June. There would be a steel band playing in the garden but if there were any other suggestions for entertainment, these could be passed to SS for co-ordination.

Mrs Freeman suggested that vegetables from the veg garden could be sold on open day.

SS/CA

3.3 Incident in the Garden - GS advised that last year the garden was opened to the Friends of the Elderly for a charity event. There was an incident where a person was injured by an intruder. GW commented that Grosvenor acted efficiently in dealing with the incident and Friends of the Elderly have asked if they could use the garden again on 5 June. Security is now required at parties.

3.4 Fashion Show - the Matthew Williamson fashion show took place in September. This event caused some inconvenience to residents and this kind of event may not be allowed again. The show generated approximately £12,000 in income and the money went to the gardens capital fund. Any money made from event such as these will be used for garden projects. If such an event was considered again, additional conditions would be imposed eg "silent" generators etc.

3.5 Tree works - GW advised that ten years ago the committee inherited a tree programme that was reactive rather than proactive. There was too much canopy and too much shade in the garden. Since 1999 over £40k has been spent on pruning trees and the plants around and under them are now flourishing.

The annual budget for trees is now £2k.

GW commented that he had been very impressed with the way Grosvenor managed the emergency tree situation in the bad weather. Two trees fell and one had to be felled as it was dangerous. The trees have been replaced with two planes and one silver lime. The remaining Ailanthus trees will be replaced at some time as it has shallow roots and could be a risk if there is another storm.

- 3.6 Boreholes - GW advised that the works in the North East garden for the drilling of the two boreholes had started. One of the boreholes will be used to irrigate the garden, provided the water is acceptable for use on the plants.

JC advised that all residents whose properties face on to the NE garden had been sent a letter explaining the works.

SS advised that people walking dogs could use the garden in front of No 15 whilst the borehole works are taking place.

JC advised that there would be two boreholes drilled, each 150m. The first would be in the centre of the garden then the rig would be moved to drill the second.

SS commented that Matthew Payne (the project manager) was aware that it was hoped by residents that some of the garden could be kept open.

- 3.7 GW commented that it was found necessary to tighten up access to the gardens as there were a number of people walking dogs who had no right to access the garden. Therefore, new key fobs were issued and a new dog registration scheme started. There are now fewer dogs using the garden. There have been some unpleasant incidents where a few dog owners have had a disagreement over whether dogs should be on a lead. Garden users who do not keep their dog on a lead had been reminded of the rules and told their key would be turned off if they did not abide by them.

4. 2007 Accounts and 2008 Budget and matters arising

- 4.1 GW advised that, together with SD, he had evaluated the garden expenditure for the last five years. Recently the costs have come in under budget. There is now an excellent maintenance regime in place and the next step is investment in the garden.

- 4.2 GW advised that the committee were reviewing the following possible projects:

- Upgrading the fountain in the south central garden to make the fountain look more like it fits in with the surrounding area
- Increasing and improving seating
- Installation of gazebos (which would not be invasive to the views around the garden)
- Installation of a children's play area.

GW commented that the committee need to establish what the residents would prefer.

Mrs Dimitriev suggested viewing some other local children's play areas to see if their type of equipment would be suitable for Eaton Square. NAH advised that Grosvenor are keen to see a play area in Eaton Square but that it should be ensured that the equipment does not impact visually on the Square

NAH commented that a fitness trail had also been requested.

SD asked what age group the play area would be aimed at and NAH commented that, as a guide, the play area in Belgrave Square Garden is for children up to 12 years old.

Mrs Dimitriev commented that if a child injured themselves on the equipment it would be the parents/carers who would be responsible for their welfare.

GW asked if Mrs Dimitriev would like to join the committee set up to discuss the play area and Mrs Dimitriev agreed to do so. Mrs Freeman also requested to join the play area sub-committee.

GW advised that the committee are looking at upgrading and repairing some of the paths but as these works would be expensive they could be potentially spread over a few years.

SD commented that the Solid Clearmac paths that were put in a few years ago were a good decision as they have lasted much better than the traditional hoggin materials.

GW advised that Grosvenor have a plan for Eaton Square involving looking at remodelling roadways and paths. It had been suggested that any path works in the gardens should match the works to take place outside the garden.

NAH advised that Grosvenor are looking at improving streets throughout Belgravia and Mayfair in partnership with Westminster City Council. A preliminary plan for Elizabeth Street has been proposed and it is hoped that works would start there in 2009. This would be followed by Belgrave Square, Eaton Square and Ebury Street. Examples of proposed works would be decluttering, widening pavements, smoothing surfaces etc. NAH confirmed that all works would go out to consultation before they took place. NAH advised that Westminster City Council have produced a document called the "Westminster Way" aimed at producing consistency in street furniture and other items. NAH advised that Grosvenor will be producing their own guidance document in the second quarter of 2008.

Mrs Freeman asked if Sloane Square would have an impact on Eaton Square. NAH advised that the works to Sloane Square are being reconsidered and, although the final proposals will have to be reviewed, it is thought unlikely that it will impact on Eaton Square.

GW raised the issue of how the garden charges are done and how the service charge is allocated, which is traditionally done using rateable value. This can mean that comparable apartments may differ in amounts. GW proposed that although other ways had been considered, the committee be asked to review alternative methods of apportionment. Any proposals would then go to the residents for consultation.

Mrs Lemos asked if everyone paid for the garden and GW confirmed this was the case. The only extra charge is for the tennis court. JC advised that where properties are short lets, Grosvenor pay the garden charge for the property then recoup it from the rent.

GW advised that it had been proposed that money that comes in from events be put into a reserve fund, which would provide a pool of money that could then be used for projects. SD commented he would like this shown separately on the garden accounts, for clarity.

NAH advised that the income from the tennis court goes into an account and it had been agreed it could be used to benefit the garden. Currently this is at £38k. NAH suggested that income from events should also be put into here.

CW

CA and LB showed the concept drawings for the SE garden, for a vegetable bed. If agreed the works would need to start now and GW proposed a meeting be held within the next week to agree the proposals.

5. Election of the committee

- 5.1 The existing committee of George Waite, Simon Davie, Barbara Pederson, Mrs Kokalj, Mrs Donald, Princess Galitzine and Lady Bristol resigned and were re-elected. In addition, Mrs Freeman and Mrs Dimitriev were elected to the committee.

6. Any other business

- 6.1 NAH advised that sculptures on loan from the Cass Foundation had been installed in Wilton Crescent Garden and would be installed in Belgrave Square Garden soon. Interest had been shown in the idea by other gardens and it was proposed that a visit for all garden committee members would be arranged for April, to view the sculptures on site at the Cass Foundation in Goodwood.

FJG

Distribution:

All present
All absentees
All headlessees, freeholders and keyholders
Phil Hutchinson
Debbie White
Craig Wardman

Enc: Chairman's report

**EATON SQUARE GARDEN COMMITTEE
ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING: 06 FEBRUARY 2007**

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

1. South Central Garden was awarded a 'Highly Commended Certificate' [in the large private squares category] as a result of its entry into the London Gardens Society Annual competition. Eaton Square has achieved five consecutive years of awards. Well done the Garden's Department.
2. In January 2007 you may recall that we lost several of our principle trees; two 100 year old Ailanthus (tree of Heaven) one of which was blown into the road destroying one car; and seriously damaging several others and the adjacent buildings; and during the clean-up operation we were also obliged to remove a large Plane that had become unsafe. I am pleased to report that the clean up operations were managed by Grosvenor in an extremely efficient and professional manner; we have now replaced the trees [two Plane; and one Silver Lime]; and repaired the damage. Such serious incidents are rare but hurricane force winds [perhaps caused by climate change] are fast becoming annual events and we must be prepared to cope. The damage could have been much worse, but was mitigated by the annual programme of tree works that this Committee introduced in 1999. Prior to this tree care had been more reactive than proactive; and since 1999 we have been obliged to expended over £40,000; to reduce and control the tree canopy; and remove dangerous and rogue trees. The works are ongoing and our current annual budget for tree works has somewhat stabilised at £2,000.
3. In December 2006 we wrote to Residents, expressing our concerns about unauthorised access to the gardens, and the behaviour of dogs in the gardens. Electronic [fob] locks were installed; a new annual dog registration scheme was started; and the North East and South West gardens were closed to dogs to allow the lawns and borders a chance to recover. Unauthorised access has been virtually eliminated; and the two gardens are looking much improved. Unfortunately there have been several incidents involving dog walkers refusing to comply with the garden rules [keeping the dogs on a lease]; and Grosvenor [with the full support of the Committee] have been obliged to issue a formal notice of suspension of garden privilege to one Resident. Grosvenor will continue to monitor that dog walkers abide by the rules of the garden.
4. At last years AGM we explained that Grosvenor was considering the drilling of three bore holes [water] in the North East Garden. These works are now approved and scheduled to commence 25 February 2008; and when completed will provide irrigation water for the garden and the potential of a future, environmentally friendly, heating and cooling system for the adjacent properties. The works will require part of the North East garden to be closed off for an extended period; and Grosvenor is currently in consultation with the Committee, so that we can ensure minimal inconvenience to Residents. We will be providing a more detailed description of these works and the area of the garden that will be affected under separate cover.
5. Accounts for year ending 2006 had a total expenditure of £149,183 against a budget of £162,900. Total expenditure for year ending 2007 was £151,185 against a budget of £167,800. The draft budget for the current year [2008] shows a total expenditure of £170,590; however this is still at the consultation stage with the Committee.
6. New projects currently being considered by the Committee include:
 - a. Upgrade to the South Central Garden's Fountain and Raised Beds;
 - b. Upgrade to the garden seating areas [including potential for additional garden buildings [Gazebo]];
 - c. Children's Play Area;
 - d. Jogging Trail;
 - e. Repair and upgrade to the paths.

7. At last years AGM I explained that the current method of apportionment of the garden charge between the various properties in Eaton Square is based upon the old rateable value system (pre-1973); and this is grossly inconsistent. Grosvenor prepared a sample of average garden charges over a 5 year period, which showed that the garden charge for an apartment varied from £71 to £554; individual houses varied from £314 to 461; and individual houses plus mews varied from £406 to £1,246; whilst the average apartment charge was only £253. Our lease provisions in regard to garden costs are that each property should pay a fair proportion with other properties. Other garden square' achieve this fair share by apportioning charges on an equal basis, rather than using the old rateable value system. It is therefore proposed that we consider three categories: (i) apartments [apportioning all apartments as equal: £216]; (ii) individual houses [£647]; and (iii) houses plus mews houses [£754]. We will be writing to all Residents with our recommendations.

8. In conclusion, on behalf of the Eaton Square Garden Committee, I would like to thank our fellow residents for their ongoing support and understanding; the Gardens Department for their hard work; the Grosvenor and the Trustees for their continuing financial support.

George J. Waite
Chairman ESGC