February 1, 2017

SJC Master Gardeners

Butterfly Memory Garden: First Meeting @ the Extension Office in Shepherd (10:00 a.m.)

**Nine Members Present**: Ceil Bialkowski, Judi Benestante, Karla Fratt, Dorris Graves, Kathy McCraigh, Sandra Smith, Michael Smith, Carolyn Tull and Darchele Vucinovich

**Absent:** Beth Miller and Debbi Goodale

Meeting called to order by Carolyn Tull at 10:10 a.m.

Darchele provided a written agenda and suggested we start with the history since there is and will continue to be a lot of emotional connections to the garden.

**History**:

Karla shared that the original idea for the butterfly garden was conceived by Connie Heiman and Connie drew the original garden plan (plan can be found on the website under the Butterfly Garden tab). Karla was good friends with Connie and she knows what Connie wanted to see in the garden. After Connie’s passing, some things were changed from the original plan such as the cobblestone path. With concern for ADA compliance, the stones were changed to concrete. Karla spearheaded the team to “make the garden happen”. The tree selection for the front was also changed.

In 2015, Judi Benestante was given approval to submit a grant application called “Bring Back the Monarchs to Texas”. With that application, Judi added to Connie’s original drawing and included all of the areas around the Community Center. (SJC MG’s did secure approval from the Community Center Board to re-plant the bed along the side of the building facing the courthouse.) With the grant application and the award application that was also submitted in early 2016, Judi’s revised plan was included with both.

**Name of the Garden**:

The garden has been and continues to be called by various names – none of which have ever been approved by the membership. Carolyn passed around a list of many names and it was narrowed down after much discussion by the group. A majority agreed on naming the garden “The Gardens of SJC Master Gardeners”. The idea is that this allows us to keep the butterfly garden and allows us to add other plants as well as consider demonstration areas and other plantings versus only plants that are specifically named for butterflies. We agreed to make our name proposal to the membership at our next meeting as well as take other suggestions from the floor.

**2017 Budget of $2,000:** (Includes $350 donated to us by the Garden Club)

Current budget must pay for on-going maintenance items such as mulch and replacement plants. It also includes funds to install new beds on the courthouse side of the building as well as in the alcove in the front on the same side. These planting areas will require drainpipes, rocks, plants and mulch. Lots of ideas and concerns were suggested and discussed related to designing these areas. We determined that we would meet again after the regular meeting on Thursday, Feb. 23rd. At this meeting, we are expected to bring specific ideas, drawings and cost estimates. At this next Garden Committee meeting, we will choose a design and vote on how to proceed. Our goal is to begin work as soon as possible on these areas.

**Work Plan Agreed Upon**:

We will have our first group clean-up work day on Feb. 17th starting at 8:30 a.m. Activities will be to trim all plants and remove weeds. Going forward this year the majority agreed that our maintenance plan will be to have at least 2 members each work one hour every week in the garden. They can choose their own day and their own time during the week. This new work schedule will be communicated to the membership and a sign-up sheet will be provided.

**Long Term Goals for the Garden**:

A vote was taken by show of hands. We would like to see building fund account money spent on some of our ideas to improve and beautify what we have already started here that carries our name. Judi Benestante volunteered to present our ideas for the garden to the membership at the next regular meeting. Ideas included are: 1) water collection system 2) privacy fence or panel screen on two sides of primary garden 3) vertical display of memorial bricks with lights 4) pergola with seating 5) propagation tables on back side and 6) water feature. Michael Smith will contact Montgomery County about having one of their experts come and talk to us at the Feb. meeting about water collection and distribution.

**Closing Summation**:

It was discussed that the garden is a group project. As we move forward, no one person is in charge of making all the decisions for the garden. We will meet as needed and discuss ideas and plans. A vote will be taken and the majority will determine how we are going to proceed. When we go to the garden to work, we should know in advance what is expected and/or needed.

Minutes respectfully submitted,

Darchele Vucinovich