

**Master Gardener Association of Bergen County
Board Meeting Minutes – September 17, 2024**

President Schneider called the meeting to order at 5:31 pm.

Roll Call – Keith Mazanec took the roll call.

Present: Hosting – Theresa Schneider, Lisa Yoler, Jean Friedman, Keith Mazanec, Miriam Taub, Arnie Friedman, Chris Kozar, Janet Stofkoper, Donna Dorgan, Wendy Sowa-Maldarelli, Maria Bushman, Karen Riede, Joseph Cooper

Absent: Suzanne Danzig, Suzy Basu, Cesar Coy, Alison Bloomfield

Approval of Minutes - President Schneider announced she sent out a copy the August Board meeting minutes, which was held via; Zoom on Aug. 6. She asked Board members to review them and forward any corrections / edits to her and Keith. Once the feedback has been provided, we can vote to approve the August minutes at a later date.

Officer Reports:

President – Theresa Schneider

Theresa reported that she had met with Marie, who has offered Alpine Scout Camp facility in Alpine, NJ as an alternative meeting site for future board meetings.

Vice President – Lisa Yoler

No report given. Lisa will make a presentation during the “New Business” section of the meeting.

Treasurer – Jean Friedman

The Treasurer’s reports were presented and filed for June, July and August, 2024. Directors and Officers insurance was purchased at a cost of \$735.66. A letter from the IRS was received stating that our application for 501 c (3) status was rejected. They will refund our application fee and we will have to re-apply.

Recording Secretary – Keith Mazanec

No additional report given.

Corresponding Secretary – Miriam Taub

- Distributed Aug. 15, Sept. 1, and Sept. 15 Potting Sheds.
- Mailed Potting Shed and attachments to 2 dues-paying members who don’t have electronic access; mailed sympathy card to Jeffrey Chan on the death of his wife; received acknowledgement card from Jeffrey.

Committee Reports:

Community outreach liaison – Arnie Friedman

Arnie attended an RMGANJ state meeting (hybrid) during which Ruth Carll presented what Rutgers is doing and the anticipated changes to the MG program. The RMGANJ as we know it is being dissolved and replaced with standing committees, focusing on awards, creating fact sheets, and exploring educational opportunities.

Theresa reported that she had spoken with Herb about what the new liaison role would look like, and Herb has said he is not interested in continuing under the reorganized format.

The Speakers Bureau continues to receive requests through November.

Publicity - Maria Bushman

Maria reported we have 58 followers on Facebook and 61 followers on Instagram.

Hospitality – Chris Kozar

Chris reported we are ready for the 2024 Fall Festival.

Membership – Janet Stofkoper

Janet reported we have a total of 105 dues paying members.

Newsletter – Miriam Taub

Miriam will be at the Fall Festival to take photos. She also requested to forward her any photos of gardening activities for consideration in future Potting Sheds.

Garden Club Liaison – Distributed Potting Sheds and notified liaisons of upcoming Potting Shed deadlines.

Programs – Donna Dorgan

Donna initiated a discussion and was seeking feedback concerning the stipend we pay speakers based on their credentials. Also for consideration are their preparation time, travel time and actual presentation. The 2024 budget was approved, and Donna can allocate those resources designated for speakers as she sees fit.

Trips and Tours sub-committee – Suzy Basu (absent)

No report given.

Site coordinator liaison – Wendy Sowa-Maldarelli

Met with Liz Gil to do some transition training.

Volunteer Records – Suzanne Danzig (absent)

Suzanne’s report was presented by Miriam:

We currently have 101 Accepted/active MG up from 99 last month, 41 are still in the process of completing their hours for initial certification. Karen and I will review those who remain in process at the end of the year, as some are from class of ’22 and ’23 and have recorded very few hours or none at all. We can welcome our newly certified MG, Patricia Weiss, class of ’24. YTD our MGs recorded 4180 Outreach hours, 627 admin hours, 171 Special Events hours, 89 hours on Hotline, 56 Teaching hours and 592 CE hours. I would like to remind our board members to record your hours, both Outreach as well as CE hours in order to maintain your certification status. Should anyone need assistance, I am always available to assist with your entries.

Website – Joseph Cooper and Miriam Taub

Joseph reported that he had reviewed the proposed changes made by the ad hoc committee with Gayle Clayton. These changes will allow more interaction with the website and will give us the ability to swap out photos and videos. Miriam stated that all the changes are now live.

Rutgers Cooperative Extension liaison – Karen Riede

Karen read Joel’s report:

RCE Report to the MG Association Board Mtg. 9.17.24
Joel Flagler

1. The Historic Bergen County Agriculture 2025 calendar is done and I have a stack of them in my car. I will sell them at the Fair and I think every MG will want one on their bulletin board. The photos are extraordinary and the history is so rich and colorful. The Bergen County Board of Agriculture (which started in 1895) laid out the money for the printing and I will return all cash proceeds to them. They may do another printing if the first batch sells fast. I think it will, at only \$20 each. Cash only please. I’ll see you at the Fair next weekend.
2. The MG training in Bergen County will be in hiatus for 2025 as we seek to name Karen’s successor and bring them up to speed on how the MG program runs. Now that we are statewide and coordinated by Ruth Carll, there are guidelines and protocols to follow. I look forward to orienting and working with the new hire once they are named. What is wonderful is that we still have dozens of newly trained MGs in Bergen County who are still returning volunteer hours as their volunteer agreement states. They will be invaluable for the work they do in 2025 in County Parks, Environmental Fairs, Earth Day events, and other key functions. Having those individuals plug into the long-established MG teams will help in the transitions that next year will bring.

Joel's report cont...

3. Toward the end of this coming winter I will retire. I joined Rutgers Cooperative Extension in 1987 and it has been a joy for all these many decades. No specifics yet, but I wanted to tell you all that after our winter horticulture conferences, I will be finishing up in March 2025. Thank you for all you do; it has been my honor and pleasure to know you and work alongside you. We need you to help with the transitions in our office and keep the forward momentum going. We love Bergen County, and Bergen County loves the MGs!

Class Liaison – Cesar Coy (absent); Alison Bloomfield (absent)

No report given.

Unfinished Business

Audit

Maria Bushman reported that she had met with Jean Friedman on Sept. 3, 2024 to conduct an audit of the MG of BC financials. The scope of the audit included tax returns, budget, check payments, deposits, bank reconciliations and records through July 31, 2024. Maria read a list of recommendations moving forward, which she and Jean have agreed upon.

Theresa advised that the board must now vote to accept or reject the recommendations.

Motion: Arnie motioned to accept the audit report as stated. Nine members voted to accept the report. Motion passed.

Site Visit/Assessment of Bergen County Rowing Center at Riverside County Park in Lyndhurst.

Karen reviewed the following proposal to add the above as a new MG of BC volunteer site.

Criteria: 1-3 The location must be in Bergen County. It is open to the public and is accessible to people of all ages:

This site is located in southern Bergen County, which is lacking an approved volunteer site in that part of the county.

Riverside County Park stretches over 85 acres along the Passaic River in the municipalities of Lyndhurst (Riverside County Park North) and North Arlington (Riverside County Park South).

With a multitude of opportunities for passive and active recreation, Riverside County Park offers something for everyone to enjoy. This park is included in the County's Recreation and Open Space Inventory (ROSI) as a New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection ("NJDEP") Green Acres funded property. Funded parkland must have open and reasonable public access to all New Jersey residents.

Amenities in Riverside County Park range from ball fields and tennis courts, to picnic areas and walking paths, to a state-of-the-art rowing center and amphitheater, and more!

New Volunteer Site Application Proposal cont...

ACTIVE RECREATION • Tennis courts (2 - with lights) • Baseball field (permit required) • Softball field (permit required) • Bocce courts (permit required)

PASSIVE RECREATION • Over 3 miles of biking or walking asphalt paths • Passaic River lookout point • Picnicking - pavilions available (permit required)

OTHER AMENITIES • Concession stand • Off-leash dog park

As part of ongoing renovations at Riverside County Park South, located in North Arlington and Lyndhurst, the existing playground will be updated to comply with standards outlined in Jake's Law. Jake's Law, passed in 2019, encourages counties to build completely inclusive playgrounds. This proposed playground will be accessible for all 5-12 year olds.

The county owns the Bergen County Rowing Center at Riverside Park South, which was completed in September 2022. The Bergen County Department of Parks has partnered with the non-profit organization Passaic River Rowing Association (PRRA) since 2003 to operate the Riverside Park facility and offer community rowing programs to the general public.

PRRA is a nonprofit, community based rowing club in Lyndhurst, which offers competitive and recreational programs to rowers of all ages (minimum age of 14) at all skill levels from novice to veteran. A person does not need to be a member of PRRA to have access to or use of the in-water improvements. As a condition of agreement with the county, PRRA agrees to develop and provide community programming for the public at the boathouse and the in-water Improvements. Community programming shall be made in consultation with the County. Activities include, but are not limited to, Community Rowing Programs, Learn to Row Programs, Monthly Open Rowing Days, Competitive Rowing Programs, coordination with local teams, coordinating teams that come to Riverside County Park to train.

As part of the contract the county has with the PRRA, the county shall also be responsible for keeping any landscaping, including any irrigation system, with adequate watering and maintenance, and replacing landscaping, including all growth of weeds and other objectionable vegetation.

4. It offers educational opportunities, i.e., presentations, dissemination of environmentally related events, and/or gardening knowledge. As per State MG Coordinator Ruth Carll, to create a demonstration garden and to increase educational opportunities for the public, a sign may be displayed at the site while the MG volunteers are working that states "Ask a Master Gardener," and a sign left in the ground that states that the site is maintained by the Master Gardeners of Bergen County with hotline numbers provided.

5. A volunteer MG site coordinator is available. As a Special Project approved by County Ag Agent/MG Program Coordinator Joel Flagler upon the request by the BC Parks Dept. for maintenance of the planting beds, MG Karen Riede (2017) has been serving as an Interim MG Site Coordinator at this site.

New Volunteer Site Application Proposal cont...

6. Volunteer MGs are already working there or are interested in working there: MG Karen Riede (2017) states that 3 interns - 2 from the MG class of 2024 and 1 from the MG class of 2023 who all live in the area, have been working at this site weekly since the beginning of May and will continue to work at this site until the regatta takes place on 10/13.

7. The proposed site is either new or has been de-listed in the past: This is a new volunteer site application.

Site visit:

A committee consisting of the MG of BC president, liaison site coordinator, and/or volunteer records coordinator or designees will visit the proposed site to determine if the above criteria have been met: Site visit took place 8/13/24 with MG Theresa Schneider (2016), MG of BC Board President, and MG Karen Riede (2017).

Motion: Arnie motioned to appoint Karen Riede as site coordinator and add this site on a two-year trial basis. Joseph seconded the motion. Motion passed.

New Business

Support for Valley Hospital

Lisa Yoler made the following request in support of introducing horticultural therapy at Valley Hospital in Paramus.

Maria Bushman and I have volunteered at the new Valley Hospital in Paramus, New Jersey for the past few weeks. Currently, we offer complimentary coffee and snacks to visitors who are there supporting loved ones. We spoke with the Director of Volunteering and asked if we would be permitted to do a Therapeutic Horticulture activity on the day of Thanksgiving. Maria and I intend to go there on the morning of Thanksgiving Day to visit and socialize with the patients. We want a small-sized pumpkin pre-carved and several flowers available for the patient to create a mini centerpiece. We aim to work with 50 patients in the ICU, Cardiac Care, Oncology, and Geriatric Pulmonary Units. Valley Hospital Volunteer Services does not have a budget for this activity for 2024, so I am asking the board of the Master Gardeners of Bergen County to consider donating \$100 towards this Thanksgiving Day Therapeutic Horticulture Activity. This particular activity fits well within our mission: "To develop and enhance community programs related to horticulture, environmental improvement, horticultural therapy projects, community and school gardening projects, and other programs as determined by local need." Additionally, Maria and I will discuss gardening topics with the patients, giving them some fun facts about the flowers we will use and our relationship with plants, especially around our holiday tables. The anticipated total amount of money needed for this project is around \$250, but I plan to also reach out to local nurseries to acquire donations of small pumpkins. We will include a sign that says something like, "The Master Gardeners of Bergen County have generously donated the flowers." For 2025, Valley Hospital would consider putting this activity in their budget. Valley Hospital is a not-for profit hospital.

Motion: A motion was made to approve a \$100 donation to support this activity. Joseph seconded the motion. Motion passed.

A request will be sent to Joel to have this activity considered as a special project.

Announcements

Theresa expressed a “thank you” on behalf of the Board to Karen Riede for all of her help and assistance over the years to the MG of BC.

Motion: A motion was made by Joseph to adjourn the meeting. Arnie seconded the motion. Meeting adjourned at 6:53pm.