

Community Garden Ireland

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING
2nd October 2016
CARRAIG DULRA, CO WICKLOW



MINUTES

Those Present:

Sandra Austin (Mirino Institute)
Aine Bell (North Mayo Heritage Centre)
Joanne Butler (OURganic Gardens)
Ciaran (Dublin Community Growers)
Taragh Cosgrove (Foxford Community Garden)
Eoin Craven (Sligo Community Gardens)
Lily de Sylva (Silverwood)
Ingrid Foley (Organic Centre)
Sinead Moore (Secondary teacher and Green Party)
John O'Donohue (Muck and Magic CG; Dublin Community Growers)
Dee Sewell (Greenside Up)

No. 1 - Correspondence and Apologies:

Miren Samper, Ian Sewell, Susan Lynn, Larry Masterson, Robbie Breadon, Phil Coffey

AP Action Points

No. 2 - Chairperson's Annual Report

DS: Thanked and welcomed everyone and explained the purpose of the AGM.

She expressed her sincere thanks to everyone for coming along and supporting CG Ireland since its inception. Dee apologised for not holding an AGM until now, it was for no other reason than it's only during the last year that we've really begun to really grow as a group. As a result of a serious change of focus, 2016 has been a momentous one for our organisation in terms of our structure, public perception and transparency and the following highlights what has been happening.

Funding

For the first time, at the beginning of the year we applied for three funding opportunities:

1. Ireland's funds – to help fund our research in regard to identifying and contacting all the community gardens in Ireland.
2. Social Entrepreneur.
3. IPB.

Unfortunately we were unsuccessful with the first two applications but the positive side of submitting the applications was that it gave us the opportunity to create a strategy and begin the journey to governance and compliance which has given us a firm direction and will allow us to apply for funding in the future.

Dee received very positive feedback from Ireland's Funds; the omission they felt was that it didn't give clear enough detail about the importance and advantages of having a national organisation. They could see the benefits, they just weren't written down in the application. Likewise the social entrepreneur feedback was positive but not enough detail was given about the training proposal. We're still waiting to hear about the third application which if successful, will help us create 10 county networks.

Website

In 2015 we invested some funds into a new Wordpress.org website which Dee built and is administering pro-bono as we found the old NING forum site wasn't working effectively and was costly. After a year of running both sites, we finally cancelled the NING in September, a year after the launch of the new site.

There is an opportunity for people to add blog posts to the website which Dee has been encouraging people to do. Joanne Butler and Sarah Kernan have provided posts and updates and Dee urged everyone/anyone else to as often and as much as we can. The more that the words community gardening are mentioned in relevant posts on the website, the better chance we have of Google, and importantly community gardens, finding us.

Mapping

In the early part of this year Dee installed a google map onto the website which pins many of the community gardens in Ireland that we are aware of. This will form the basis of a project to make contact with them all and invite them to become members of CG Ireland as well as continue to pin and contact more gardens. The Membership question is on the AGM Agenda. After consultation with the coordinator of the Community Supported Agriculture, Dee also added the CSA gardens to the map and both types of gardens can be 'switched on or off'. Not all the community garden information is accurate as it has been lifted from many different sites online but with the creation of county networks, we hope to be able to update this.

Governance

During the early part of the year Dee registered the Community Garden Network on the Governance.ie website under Type A organization and hopes to sign off the compliance document to fully comply at the end of this meeting. Dee also mentioned we would be discussing the legal structure going forward this morning i.e., whether to make the organisation a limited company and/or a charity and if we agree to become a company limited by guarantee, to begin to adopt the Type B governance guidelines.

Name Change

During the early part of the summer Dee enquired with the Irish Environmental Network if we could join. At the time she hadn't realized if we were accepted we would be eligible for a grant from them. This, to a degree, led to the wording and discussions surrounding the Strategic Framework and resulted in us changing our name following public consultation, to Community Gardens Ireland; the IEN doesn't accept networks.

Partner Organisations

As the strategic framework was being written and commented on by fellow coordinators, it became apparent that CG Ireland had developed to become an independent umbrella organisation that helps and supports all agencies and individuals working with community gardens; a full description of our mission, aims, vision etc., can be found on the Framework document itself. We have developed a good relationship with several of them already but there is work to be done.

Our last meeting and community garden meet up took place in Belfast with help from the Federation of City Farms and Community Gardens and we were given an interesting talk and tour surrounding PEACE gardening. Our previous meeting was in Ballymun with thanks to the support of Dublin Community Growers and Global Action Plan. We still have a lot of work to do to grow and support the relationships with everyone working with, promoting and supporting community gardening in Ireland and hopefully a clearer vision today will help us achieve that.

Events

Thanks to Lily de Sylva who put our names forward, the highlight of our year was meeting President Higgins at a garden party in the summer for groups involved in sustainability. Joanne Butler, John O'Donohue, Sandra Austin and myself represented CG Ireland and helped to raise awareness of the organisation by being the only people there to wear branded T shirts!

Once again Dee was asked to coordinate the pop up community garden in Electric Picnic and we were given 8 tickets for CG Ireland representatives, 50% more than last year! We had a very good weekend, engaged with lots of people, and have plans to improve upon our engagement with punters if we're invited back next year.

Merchandise

Joanne Butler very kindly provided coordinators with colourful tee shirts with the new logo but all our other merchandise, popups, literature is now sadly out of date due to the name change.

Biodiversity Centre

This year the Biodiversity Centre in Waterford published new guidelines to support the National Pollinator Plan which we've linked to on our website as partners and contributors. Following discussions with them, members of Community Gardens Ireland now have the opportunity to be trained by them to deliver the plan and will be given training aids to do so. This is particularly worth noting as the new LEADER funding includes a large section on promoting and encouraging biodiversity in communities. More of that will follow during the Agenda items.

People 4 Soil

In September a new European initiative was launched from People 4 Soil. Their aim is to secure 1 million signatures to give soil a voice in Ireland. 44 Individuals and groups have signed up to help this campaign which Michael Ewing of the IEN has been coordinating and CG Ireland is one of them. The aim is to get over 8,000 signatures in Ireland. More details about this and how we can support it over the next year will follow over the coming months.

AP: Dee will upload to the blog/website

No. 3 - Treasurer's Annual Report and Balance Sheet.

The members voted to adopt and approve the financial reports.

AP: Dee/Sandra to liaise with Mark Stewart re new accounting structure.

AP: Sandra to email accounts to all present.

AP: Sandra to organise bank account: change name and signatories, discuss charges, online banking.

AP: Dee to upload accounts to website.

No. 4 - Election of Officers

HONORARY OFFICERS

a) **Nominations for Chair: Dee Sewell** 1- Lily de Silva 2 – Eoin Craven. Elected unopposed

b) **Nominations for Treasurer: Sandra Austin** 1 – Eoin Craven 2 – Dee Sewell. Elected unopposed

c) **Nominations for Secretary** (includes Membership): **Joanne Butler** 1- Sandra Austin 2 – John O' Donohue. Elected unopposed

ORDINARY MEMBERS

d) Elected to the Committee:

Lily de Silva – interested in Education and PR/Media

Eoin Craven – interested in Education & Events

Ingrid Foley - interested in Education

Suzie Cahn – interested in Governance

John O'Donohue - interested in Governance

The business of the meeting having been completed, the AGM was brought to a close.

Committee Meeting – continuance of the meeting:

1. GOVERNANCE

Suzie – introduced the principles of governance that apply to us as an organisation. It was agreed that we would look into creating and progressing into type B Governance.

AP: Suzie, Sandra, John and Joanne will all work on this as a sub group. To cc Dee in all correspondence. Time frame on this as first week in December.

AP: Dee will open a DropBox, load all the governance type documents into it and share with the committee.

NB : we spoke about running virtual committee meetings as well as actual meetings.

1a. ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE IN CGI :

AP: It was agreed to work towards setting up a company limited by guarantee (no shareholders / with trustees/board member) governance subcommittee will work on this also – **AP:** same time frame.

The question was asked IEN membership: do we have to be a company limited by guarantee ?or we are in transition to be a company limited by guarantee?

AP: Dee to follow up

1b. FINANCIAL ACCOUNTABILITY :

We spoke about looking to recruit someone onto the committee that has skills in financial accountability.

AP: Suzie will speak to Cirian from GIY and we will look at The Wheel for support or info.

2. EDUCATION , PROMOTION ETC

AP: It was agreed that Lily ,Eoin and Ingrid would take a look at the education end of things within CGI

AP: Suzie said she would like to look at promoting the CGI to other partner groups.

AP: Dee will act as Spokesperson.

3. MEMBERSHIP

3a) We spoke about updates on the google docs –

AP we will look at email notifications to make sure all sub committees are getting notes.

3b) What do we want from membership? What can we as a network provide?

3c) Structure & Benefits (Drawn on Whiteboard and being tabled out as attachment)

Discussion:

- Skills for co-ordinators
- A county network ‘membership’ could be up to 250 euro per year. They would garner this from their local community gardens
- Individual membership for CGs

By going to county level for creating networks – allows access to LA21 and county council funding opportunities.

SC: Aligned Orgs/partnerships –

AP we need to discuss this separately from membership. Good doc available from Wheel about partnership agreements

Aligned organisations – we should offer them free membership, could just list them as aligned. Separate from membership.

Everything should be firmly labelled as PILOT at the moment.

Membership Benefits we could offer (at national level):

- Skills and mentorship for trainers and coordinators
- Website content – information flow (worth keeping the analytics)
 - o Toolkits/how-to’s
 - o Links to supports
 - o Other info
 - § Local area
 - § Information and promotion

- National events
 - o Members' discount
- Newsletter
- *Insurance, possibly (though SC recommends holding off, it can create a huge headache).
- Database of tutors and environmental educators.

Benefits Local networks could offer:

- Practical skills/horticultural skills
- Networking events (Quarterly)
- Network markets /social enterprise opportunities

Membership Subcommittee will now consist of Joanne with help from, Suzie, Joanne, Dee if needed

Discussion on ChangeX – outsourcing ‘join a group’ or ‘start a group’ to them.

AP Dee will follow up.

4. DISCUSSION ON SUB-GROUPS

AP Creating County Groups – to co-organise with Joanne – John in Dublin, Ingrid in Sligo / Leitrim ... we need to find reps for Cork etc....

Alignment – AP Dee / Suzie will look into contacting groups to align in with CGI.

Partnership AP exploration will be looked into by Dee via The Wheel.

5. PR/Media

PR AP Lily wants to create a platform to promote the CGI – better together is ongoing but has a few difficulties sharing the video

AP We will agree to send out a contact list of everyone in this meeting - Joanne can do this

AP Lily will send us out a link to better together to that list

6. Events

AP: Eoin will start looking at events for the coming year and look at the old questionnaire.

7. Chemical Free Status for Community Gardens

A difficult one to police. Sandra suggested a charter. Ingrid made recommendations which includes gardens attending a training course where they sign the charter.

AP: Ingrid will draw up a draft charter for consideration.

8. Code of Conduct/Conflict of Interest

AP: Dee will consult The Wheel guidelines and create a document for consideration.

9. NEXT MEETING

Dublin Saturday December 3rd in Dublin (Central)-

AP John will organise this

Issues to be discussed:

Projected costs: for next year – **AP** Dee, Sandra and Joanne will work on this

Talk about future LAUNCH of the new network in the near future ...

Look at the year's programme for 2017 – **AP** to be discussed at the December meeting/Eoin to start work on it.