

**WILLIAMSTOWN GARDEN CLUB  
BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING  
January 7, 2025 at 3:00 pm  
Milne Public Library Board Room and via Zoom**

- A. CALL MEETING TO ORDER: President Karen Parker called the meeting to order at 3:06 p.m. The following Board members were present: Betty Iannitelli, Delia Marshall, Kathy McKnight, Susan Montiel (via zoom), Elaine Neely, Carol Oshinsky (via zoom), Karen Parker, Maria Siskind, Pat Wilk, Joan Wright. Absent: Karen Pellegrini (ex officio member). Also present was Diane Van Kempen.
- B. CONFIRM QUORUM: a quorum was present.
- C. APPROVE MINUTES from November 8, 2024 board meeting: Joan Wright moved to approve, Elaine Neely second, all voted in favor.
- D. REPORTS:
1. President's Report (Karen Parker)
    - a) Holiday Luncheon: We all received a printed report on the holiday luncheon, as an attachment to this meeting's agenda.
    - b) Job descriptions: Karen clarified that two different documents are due from each board member: first, an updated description of each board member's job (Susan has electronic copies of the job descriptions for all elected positions; contact her if you need a copy of yours); second, a report of what was accomplished in that position during the year. We revised the time frame for the future: job descriptions should be updated each January. Report of accomplishments to be written in September and reported on at the annual meeting with text copy to the President.
    - c) Winter Season projects: We are undertaking a lot this winter.
      - a. We are re-designing the plant sale, moving from a one-leader format to several leaders.
      - b. Lenita Bober, owner of Blossoming Acres, a farm/bakery, will do a February 25 presentation on container plant selections and maintenance. She does civic containers for Pittsfield and Dalton and is a 35-year seller at the Lanesboro Farmer's Market. We agreed that the public should be invited to this event, and that Tom Parker, our publicity person, should send an announcement to the library to include in their newsletter, and to some other news contacts, including the Berkshire Eagle, the Chamber of Commerce newsletter, and Destination Williamstown.
      - c. Other winter season projects include planning for America 250—the semi-quincentennial (see Diane's report below) and trying to form a tech group that can manage zoom meetings for former members and those out of town.
  2. Treasurer's report: (Carol Oshinsky):
    - a) Update: Checking account balance is \$9,656.60. Money Market account balance is \$6,503.01.

The Berkshire Taconic statement for the end of the year has not yet been published. Finance chair (Susan M) recommended to the treasurer that funds be moved from the checking or money market account to Berkshire Taconic, where it will earn more interest.

- b) Hank Art in-kind gift: We have sent a letter to Hank Art confirming his gift of several gardening books he has written to the club. We have agreed that future in-kind gifts to the club must be approved by the board before their acceptance.

3. Civic Beautification:

- a) Containers: (Delia Marshall) She reviewed the locations of container gardens for 2025, including two new ones at entry points to the Syndicate Road and Cole Avenue multi-use recreational path. We ordered plants from Zema's, and plan to order perhaps a dozen additional plants from Mount Williams Greenhouses, where the owners have agreed to grow for us. We agree that as a club, we want to support local businesses whenever possible. Delia showed images of several container plant combinations planned for 2025.

- b) Perennial Gardens:

- a. Diane spoke about needs for the Sally Tenney Osborne Garden at the Milne Public Library, which she said is overgrown and needs ground cover. The library has requested the club to provide more soundproofing in the garden, and Diane feels it needs to be redone with the advice of a professional. She suggested Larry Cochran, a Master Gardener who is also a landscaper. Field Park might benefit from professional insight as well. We agreed that the club should find a professional landscaper, who might also share ideas for plots at the Post Office and Town Hall. We would like estimates for preliminary ideas and drawings at our next meeting.

4. Membership: (Kathy McKnight)

- a) Honorary Membership for Marilyn Faulkner: The board is in support of granting Marilyn honorary membership, but she has already paid her club dues for 2025, and we feel that the fall meeting of the club, which has a celebratory feel and summarizes our year together, is the right time to announce honorary members.
- b) Unpaid members: There are still several members who have not yet paid. Kathy passed out to us a list of these individuals, and we shared insights about those who have moved or whose circumstances have changed.
- c) Programs Report: (Maria Siskind) Maria shared a rough draft of her list of ideas. There will be a "Hort Short" on tools at our April 8 welcoming meeting, where we serve a light lunch. She has been speaking with Chris Ferraro, a western Massachusetts gardener highly recommended by Diane, to see whether she might be willing to present to the club. Maria is investigating Edith Wharton's estate as a possible destination for our big spring trip, tentatively set for June 10. They would charge us \$18 per person for a tour of the gardens. Another possible destination is William and Katie Schmidt's Pownal residence, which is contemporary and beautifully landscaped. Possible speakers include Rene Wendell at Nature Conservancy, Becca Sturgis from Reed Hildebrand—which is designing the

landscaping for the new Williams College Museum of Art and Clark Art, as well as the overall Williams College campus. Will she talk about all three projects? Might she donate some of her time to help us with our design ideas—that would have the advantage of making things consistent in Williamstown garden design. Other ideas: Berkshire Botanical Garden? Hawley Bog? Phil Smith has a beautiful peony garden. The November program will be “Flower Show School” which includes both a workshop on use of line and mass in flower arranging plus hands-on practice for our members. We were excited about all of these ideas.

5. Communications: (Susan Montiel) We are still having problems with our web site. Members cannot access the member contact information. Susan is working with a young man at Williams who does web site design and has his own hosting platform. She is optimistic that they will be able to solve the problems.
6. Publications: (Kathy McKnight)
  - a) We will need a final list of 2025 programs by Feb. 15 in order for them to be included in our new booklet.

D. UNFINISHED BUSINESS:

1. By-law and Standing Rules changes: (Kathy): We discussed how and when to get by-laws changes to our members. Goal is to have these reviewed by the board early in 2025 but hold until the annual meeting. Standing rules will be reviewed and approved by the board (not the membership). This item is still open.
2. VP/Board vacancy: this position is still open.
3. Plant Sale 2025: (Kathy McKnight) Kathy sent us a written report on the plant sale. She said that although it’s a lot of responsibility for a few people, it’s one of the most visible things we do. She reviewed her ideas for changing its organization and why. The part that’s hard is house plants; in her new plan, 30 members will babysit five plants each. After the propagation workshop, members have to pick up their plants—that’s their job. Last year, Kathy had 100 plants in her house! The plants should be organized on tables according to their light and water requirements, because that’s what students asked about most frequently when deciding what plants to buy. We need to get that word out in March, everybody has a responsibility. Last year we had at least 300 plants, and net profits from the sales were about \$2200.
4. Mentoring New Members (Joan) Joan again raised the idea of assigning members as mentors for our newest members, perhaps assigning two board members to each new person and expecting that a goal will be connecting them with a club committee that matches their interests, possibly even having a budget line item for taking these new members out for coffee. Kathy felt that level of formality wasn’t necessary— and restated her view that recruiting and welcoming new members is the ongoing responsibility of every club member.

5. Hiring Help. We agreed that we can afford to hire the help we need. We need to decide exactly what help is necessary and get some quotes.
6. Semi-quintennial celebration (America 250) – committee and timing (Diane Van Kempen). Diane has a two-page report on possible project ideas, and she shared some with us. She said Bennington already has a committee. We need to start now; if we don't plan it now, we won't be ready. She mentioned restorations of the gardens we are developing as a contribution to the celebration, the idea of planting a mini-forest of greenery at the library—which has recently lost some trees. Should we decorate the historical homes in town? Give those homeowners a planter designed by the Williamstown Garden Club to mark those homes of particular interest? Organize a tour of the old buildings in town? Plant a garden of native plants at Field Park? She asked for other ideas. Karen, Maria, Delia, and Joan volunteered to join this committee.

E. NEW BUSINESS:

1. Establishing a Tech Committee. We spoke about existing tech problems and people who might help us with solutions.

ADJOURN: Maria moved to adjourn, Elaine second, and Karen adjourned the meeting at 5 p.m.

F. NEXT MEETING DATE: March 25 at 3:00 pm

Minutes approved March 25, 2025