



YACIO Site Secretary Meeting
12th July 2021

Attending: **Tony Chalcraft [TC], Adam Myers [AM], Helen Butt[HB], Anna Pawlow [AP]**, Phil Renshaw, Graham Sanderson, David Brinklow, Paul Graham, Mary Harlington, Claire Pickard, Efro Tooms, Steve Cooke, Janet Cordingley, Jane Thurlow, John Shirbon

Apologies: Colin Smith, Lisa Turner, Simon Wild, Maria Lewington, Sarah Penn, Brian Strudwickm, Dean Fawcett, Warwick Ivel

Chair: Tony Chalcraft

Minutes: Anna Pawlow

1. Welcome

TC welcomed everyone to the meeting and asked for each attendee to introduce themselves in alphabetical site order. TC introduced Helen Butt as a prospective new Trustee interested in joining the Board. TC outlined that participants should keep muted to avoid excessive noise and that AM was the meeting Host with the ability to mute the microphones.

2. Trustees Report

TC noted that since the last meeting in February nothing momentous had occurred. The Lease with CYC had at long last been signed, which was greatly reassuring to Trustees. TC noted that a Review Meeting with Dave Meigh was soon to take place and this was a good opportunity to raise issues and asked for participants to do so under the final agenda item if they had any suggestions.

TC noted once again the HB was attending the meeting to observe in her capacity as a potential addition to the YACIO Board of Trustees. An

application from a non-YACIO member (though a holder of an allotment elsewhere) had been received and TC invited comments from Site Secretaries on their thoughts on this.

Trustees continued to hold monthly Zoom meetings to discuss YACIO business and there was a plan for a YACIO Members' Day on the 9th October to allow discussion of YACIO aims and objectives. It was hoped that this would be an in person meeting but this was heavily dependent on the evolving covid situation and any relevant regulations and member confidence.

Quarterly newsletters continued to be sent out to members and waiting lists continued to grow. Site inspections had now taken place on most sites and this had raised some interesting issues such as the use of weed suppressant membrane.

CP noted that the Constitution had specifically allowed for the inclusion of non-YACIO members in the Board of Trustees to allow for what made most sense for the needs of the Charity at the time. She noted that an external perspective could be very useful to YACIO.

It was agreed that AP should circulate draft minutes to all participants after the meeting for comments and review prior to the publication on the website.

3. Finance Report

LT had supplied a report on the finances, which TC presented in her absence. Income received had increased slightly by £5000 from this point last year but this was expected due to the disruption from the pandemic last year and more rigorous debt chasing this year. Rental income for the year was projected to be a steady £66-68,000. This number unlikely to vary much year on year due to the finite number of plots to let. Expenditure was slightly up on the same point last year but this was still within the budgeted figures.

4. Administrators Report

AP provided a brief outline of activities since the last meeting with the more rigorous debt recovery process and two newsletters having gone out to all tenants. Site inspections had resumed on most sites following on from a slow start due to the unusual weather patterns and she noted that at present there were no known issues with the site reports from Colony. She had experienced some health issues in June but thought to be all caught up now. It was noted by Trustees that this was a vulnerability of only having AP as staff and that AP was training ML to be able to take on tasks in times of peak demand to better be able to respond. AP noted that following a relative lull with site activity increasing in June there had been a spike in admin activity also. Especially following on from the recent newsletter article on Co-Tenants with people wishing to either register new co-tenants or check co-tenants were already registered. It was noted that site secretaries would appreciate a more responsive approach. AP noted that site secretaries could always ask for specific lists if they needed them as it was always quicker to produce one individual report rather than 64 reports for all sites at once. Site Secretaries discussed which lists were most useful to them briefly.

Some site specific issues were raised and it was agreed to take those queries forward separately by emails after the meeting.

Site Secretaries discussed the Co-Tenant Applications and it was debated whether or not they could review these applications before approval. It was decided that this would not be feasible with the current wave of applications but the Trustees would revisit the idea and see whether this should be worked into future processes for applications. AP reassured site secretaries that for the most part these applications were from couples who had simply only registered the tenancy in one name at the beginning and now wished to change this in accordance with the advice given in the newsletter. Any applications that were thought to be being made in suspicious circumstances could and would be challenged. AP also flagged that there had been a few issues recently where a named tenant had lost mental capacity and with no one else registered on the

plot this had been tricky to resolve. A co-tenant that could be contacted when the first tenant does not respond would be helpful in a number of circumstances.

-BREAK-

5. Site Inspections

TC resumed the session asking site secretaries to raise any issues that had come up with site inspections that they wished to and Site secretaries discussed particular issues they had encountered and asked for advice. Clarification was sought on casual approaches by site secretaries, it was noted that, for example, an email asking if a tenant was ok was fine but that site secretaries should not go out of their way to contact people not on site and to remember that any initial contacts through site secretaries were inadmissible to the formal YACIO process which would have to start from scratch if a letter were requested.

The query was raised about what to do about new tenants who did not get to work right away, it was agreed that as getting an allotment often came as a surprise to many new tenants they should not always be expected to be able to immediately get to work but that if no work were seen within 4-6 weeks then at that point a formal notice could be an option, depending on the time of year.

TC noted that with the waiting lists increasing there was a duty to ensure that plots were being utilised and not neglected. It was agreed that Trustees should look at how best to set out expectations to new tenants Site secretaries discussed plots where areas of wild flowers were prevalent. It was agreed that a managed area of wild flowers was acceptable but that this should be limited in scope. Where concerns were had about this an informal approach should be attempted at first and the plot should stay within the cultivation guidelines of the majority being utilised for cultivation of crops.

6. Plot Lettings

TC noted that at the AGM the question of the size of new plot lettings

had been raised. TC noted that YACIO were happy to leave it to the discretion of site secretaries as at present but Trustees would like to gain a better understanding of what the approach was on each site and asked that site secretaries contact him with a brief outline of their approach by email (tony.chalcraft@yorkallotments.org) within the next few weeks.

Up/Downsizing

PR outlined the process that was being used on Bootham whereby new tenants were steered towards suitable sized plots for their current abilities and any tenant who had shown good standards of gardening over several years would be allowed to move to a bigger plot if they wanted to do so. Likewise, any tenant struggling with a large plot would be given the opportunity to relocate to a smaller plot. One query had been whether tenants upsizing should be subject to the same waiting list as a new tenant. Site secretaries discussed their different approaches and the way that site structure, size and layout influenced how these options might be limited. Some sites would never offer anything larger than a half plot due to the long waiting lists as it was deemed fairer to get more people gardening rather than giving more space to existing gardeners. It was agreed that Trustees should look at the issue further taking onboard the feedback and opinions received.

7. Site Bids

AM outlined the bids priorities and reported that 18 applications had been submitted prior to the deadline, of these 9 had been agreed, 6 had been asked for further information and 3 had been rejected. It had been a generally positive and accommodating process. It had been decided that all applications for notice boards should be approved as these proved such valuable resources for communicating with tenants. There were further plans to look at subsidising water butts but these were under development. Further bids had been submitted after the deadline and it had been agreed to consider these as if they had come in beforehand but with CS on

holiday at present these later bids would be addressed on his return. In general it was felt that the bids process went a lot more smoothly this time with lessons learned from the first round beforehand making the whole process work better this year and it was hoped that further improvements would be made in future years.

8. General Issues Raised By Site Secretaries

TC reminded everyone that site specific issues should be raised in the usual way by emailing contact@ to take forward but that if there were any general issues that site secretaries wanted to raise then please do so.

Aggregates

A trend for using slate or gravel on paths or larger areas of plots had been noted with concern for the future issues this could cause. The group discussed this and it was agreed that Trustees should consider this further. It was suggested that the next newsletter might include an article educating on the issue and suggesting that the general principle of not doing anything on an allotment plot that could not be easily undone in the future should be adopted.

Van Man

It was noted that using Dave to remove rubbish was working very well and site secretaries were pleased with this and appreciative of Dave's work.

9. Next Meeting

It was agreed that the next meeting would be scheduled for October or later.