

## Friends of Montgomery Street Park

Minutes from Annual General Meeting, 22nd June 2009 at the Abbeyhill Baptist Church, 7:00 p.m.

In attendance: Julienne Thurrott, Suzanne Gibson, Chris Rankin, Christine Rigouleau, Tasca Shadix, Alistair Cairns, Gavin McNab, Kate Tomlinson, Rob Hainsworth, Charlie Henderson, Michael Davidson, Charlotte McDonald, Karen Martin, Russell Simpson, Geraldine Debard

Action (Christine?): Send along the complete roll from the meeting if we have one?

Apologies: Ann Stark, Iain McGill, Louise Lang, David and Mary McDonald, Judith Rowan, Hilda Stiven, Jane Ross

Action (?): Several of these members asked how to renew their membership; figure out a way to communicate this to members?

1. We adopted the minutes from the previous meeting on 17 June 2009.
2. Julienne Thurrott gave her Report from Chair, a detailed overview of the accomplishments of the group over the previous year, including:
  - 16 April 2008 constituted the Friends group
  - Two consultations carried out, all-volunteer, with the help of local businesses
  - Liaised with the Council to draw up a new design for the park
  - Received a grant from the Community Grant Fund for Edinburgh Lothian Greenspace Trust to carry out further consultation on the park's design
  - Organised two successful fundraising and community awareness events in the park, one in August 2008 and one in March 2009
  - Received a grant from the Parks Department for a notice board, which was installed near the play area
  - Lobbied the Council successfully for better dog signage
  - Held three park clean-up events. (It was mentioned that we were actively seeking a volunteer to help organize these in the future)
  - Re-painted the police box at the corner nearest the play park

- Got Scottish Power to re-paint the substations, which apparently cannot be removed
- Set up a website, which was originally run by John Millar; we paid for its creation and are now maintaining it ourselves
- Installed bird boxes in the park
- Sold logo bags designed by Suzanne Gibson
- Made connections/ongoing relationships with the Council and local politicians
- Joined the British Trust for Conservation Volunteers (for events insurance). It was mentioned that they would be a great resource to work with and we need someone to be a liaison with them
- Were the subject of 3 articles in the Evening News
- Got on a waiting list for a grant from the Council for a new ball pitch
- Advertised the park as a Fringe venue, which has tentatively been accepted by a mobile theatre company performing the Wizard of Oz, for 7-31 August, with 15% of sales benefiting the Friends group. It was discussed that they will have a mobile bar, but that there will be noise restrictions and as it is a family show, it will hopefully be a positive presence in the neighborhood.)

*Action (All): Continue looking for a volunteer to help with cleanups and a liaison with the British Trust for Conservation Volunteers – Note: After the meeting Geraldine Debard volunteered to liaise with BTCV – she is now the named contact person for them*

3. There were two questions from Karen Martin :

- About the ELGT consultation (which was a further consultation with 150 people concerning the proposed quiet space and play park in the new design). A mother of a Leith Walk student, she felt that the same questions were being repeated, and was confused about what was “already decided” about the design. She felt she had been given feedback during the consultation that certain aspects were already decided and didn’t understand why they were consulting on those aspects. Chris Rankin then spoke about the process of the consultation and reiterated that the design was not set in stone.

- The second question concerned children she had seen climbing on the substations; she worried that the roof might not be safe and that this was a dangerous activity. The idea of trellises or deterrent bushes as a means to stop kids climbing on the substations was discussed. Julienne said she would give Karen a contact email for Scottish Power in order to pursue the issue.

Action (Julienne): Send Karen the contact email for Scottish Power

4. There was a suggestion, also from Karen, that students from Leith Walk Primary might like to be involved in cleaning up the park. It was agreed that this was a good idea, and Suzanne said she would consider making an event of it.

Action (Suzanne and All): Consider ways to involve Leith Walk students in the group's cleanup efforts, possibly as an event of its own

5. Christine made her Report from the Treasurer.

Action (Christine?): Send Tasca the Treasurer's Report and she'll add it to the Minutes and web site. 😊

Action (Tasca): Make the Treasurer's Report available on the web site

6. Suzanne gave her Report from the Events Manager, including:

- A summary of the events held last year, their successful and not-so-successful aspects. The most successful fundraisers included: bag sales, cakes, membership applications, tombola, brick sales, and donations from businesses. It was a challenge to organize the events because of the small number of volunteers involved. Also, there will probably not be another dog show during future events in light of the dog ban.
- It was reiterated that we are planning to hold more clean-ups and need someone to arrange them, which is not a difficult task.
- It was discussed that, in the meantime while we are seeking funding for a major improvement, we would like to simply paint/brighten up the existing play park, possibly as a community event, and that perhaps we can begin planning

- It was announced that we are planning a new event for September and need volunteers. (Wasn't sure if this IS the event to brighten the play park or not?)

**Action (All): Continue to try to recruit volunteers for organizing the September event!**

- It was discussed that we might be able to canvass/advertise/increase our visibility during the Wizard of Oz show in August.
- It was mentioned that Abbeyhill Baptist Church will be holding a live music event, "Across in the Park," on 18<sup>th</sup> July 2009, with some of the proceeds to benefit the Friends group.
- Suzanne reiterated that the purpose of the fundraising events is to raise money for the Friends group to function and to raise awareness of our efforts, and they have been very successful in that respect, but that we really do need a Fundraising Manager for bringing in larger sums of money to improve the park.

**Action (All): Continue to seek a Fundraising Manager**

**Note: *Charlie Henderson volunteered to help out with this after the meeting .***

7. Gavin McNab (?) from Friends of Hillside and Calton mentioned that FoHCA hold clean-ups on the first Sunday of every month, and wondered whether we might like to tie in with those events? Their next cleanup will be 5<sup>th</sup> July.

**Action (Suzanne and All?): Decide whether we would like to join the 5<sup>th</sup> July and future cleanups with FoHCA.**

**Note: Have been following up on this in discussion with FoHCA.**

8. We discussed goals for the upcoming year and new volunteers required:

- To focus on taking down the fence between the greenspace and play park, as that seems a smaller, more achievable goal with a price tag of somewhere in the 15-20K range.
- To evaluate the results from ELGT (due by next week)

- To find the following volunteers (some have already been mentioned in these notes) in order to grow the Friends group, run it more efficiently, and allow the committee members to delegate tasks:
  - a. **Membership manager** to help attract, keep track of, and mobilize membership
  - b. **Fundraising manager** to keep track of (and bring in) larger grants
  - c. Someone to help with arranging **cleanups**
  - d. **Liaison** with British Trust for Conservation Volunteers
  - e. **Liaisons** with the community (in particular, children and the elderly were mentioned as needing better outreach, as they don't rely as much on email)
  - f. More volunteers to help with events
- To keep liaising with the Council, especially with the goal of getting the new ball pitch.
- To continue holding fundraising events that raise money and raise our profile in the community.
- Chris Rankin spoke of the need to approach the design in stages rather than necessarily being a massive project that must be accomplished all at once; we can focus on certain aspects first (such as the fence and the ball pitch) as we continue to seek funding for the rest of the project.

9. A period of miscellaneous discussion occurred, with points including:

- The possibility of asking local businesses to do some things voluntarily for us (donation of goods and services, tree removal, etc.) and whether the Council would accept that
- Impact of the closing of the postal collection facility on Brunswick Road and potential of getting developers contributions
- The need to be more systematic in approaching local groups and businesses (such as Hibs) that can be resources for us
- An interest in raised beds in the park, possibly as part of brightening/improving the existing park and involving seniors in the improvement effort
- Finding out what playground equipment might be earmarked to “disappear” from the play park, and whether it will be replaced?

- The Council is consulting on open spaces and taking comments (due by 10 July) at [www.edinburgh.gov.uk/openspacestrategy](http://www.edinburgh.gov.uk/openspacestrategy)
- Alistair Cairns of FoHCA raised the point that there are two groups that represent Montgomery Street Park (FoHCA and FoMSP) and that he would like to see a broader communication with FoHCA, especially on events occurring in the park such as the potential August Fringe show, since they also cover the park. It was agreed that better communication between the groups was important, that collaboration between the groups would be beneficial, and that we must attempt to keep FoHCA (and the wider community) better informed in the future.

#### 10. Proposals/Amendments:

- On the dog issue. Kate Tomlinson spoke about the history of the park; it began as a private bowling green, the whole park eventually was designated a children's play area and as such a dog-free zone, but enforcement waned until Malcolm Chisholm did the research to confirm that the dog ban stands. Now that the issue has been clarified and the signage improved, what can FoMSP do to help enforce the ban?

- a. Look into dog grids at the entrances?

**Action (?): Look into the cost/feasibility of dog grids**

- b. Encourage dog walking clubs to ensure that dog walkers have fun and behave responsibly and avoid inappropriate areas for dog walking. Currently there is a group from Leith Walk Primary that is acting as a sort of informal dog walking group; perhaps we could make contact with them?
- c. What advice do we give for people in the park to help enforce the ban, e.g. if they see someone entering the park with a dog? It was agreed that we should at least have a notice on the board stating that there are other places to walk dogs (London Road Gardens) and offering advice on what to do if you see the ban violated.

Action (?): Add dog information to the notice board

- On involving ordinary members more: Rob Hainsworth requested that we confirm that everyone in the community is welcome to participate in the Friends Group, that we give more and better notice of meetings and events, and that we make minutes of meetings available to the public. He approves of the group's efforts and is pleased to hear that we're actively seeking volunteers, but agrees that we must work harder to keep our members informed. We agreed that this is extremely important. We discussed reasons that the group has had difficulty with this over the past year (new group, small, overextended group of volunteers, learning curve on running a Friends group, unsure as to whether members wanted to be inundated with details, and problems with the website and secretary stepping down from her position) and re-committed to more frequent emails to membership, better advertisement of meetings, and more consistent publication of meeting minutes and information on the website; hopefully, the new Secretary will be able to help greatly with this task.
- Rob also spoke of the aforementioned need for more community liaisons so that various groups (such as children and the elderly) feel that they, too, have ownership of the park.

Action (Tasca): Send around minutes for approval and then distribute to membership and on the website as promptly as possible

11. Someone who entered the meeting late and objected to the dog ban was referred to speak to Kate Tomlinson for more information on the history of dogs in the park and the reason for the ban.

12. Thanks were made to Abbeyhill Baptist Church for the use of their facilities and the meeting was adjourned.