**Minutes of the Meeting of the
Middlesex County Master Gardener Focus Group**

**February 25, 2011**

In attendance:  John Carlson, Jamie Burgess, Marsha Dowling, Fern Martin, Susan Logotto, Peggy Becker, Maureen Gillis, Barbara Glista, Tim Grilley. **Welcome** **Interns** Tad Bartles, Sherry Van Liere, James Woodworth, and Tom Kalal!

**It is with much sadness that we acknowledge the passing of one of our founding members, Jackie Fantasia.** Her daughter Sallyrelated to Marsha how much Jackie enjoyed working with all of us at the Extension and in the Model Community Garden. Jackie was proud to be part of the council and a master gardener educational project that included donating to those in need. A service and gathering will be held at Saint Patrick's Church East Hampton on Monday March 7th. We will miss her very much.

**Welcome to the 4 new Interns!** Maureen will be in touch with more information, and access to the Website. We provided a brief overview of our history and how we operate, focusing on experimentation and also optimizing production for donations to the Middletown soup kitchen and pantry. Marsha indicated that each year, we’d like the new Intern Group to “take charge of the garden” and also discuss and implement a special project if possible. Examples of a project Interns spearheaded in the past (3 bin system, cold frame) were given. In addition to the Garden, the group also provides outreach/education; examples: teaching in Groton and giving tours of the Model Garden.

**Thank you to Fern** for the delicious spread, enough to feed an army!

**Financials:**

Maureen indicated that we have $431.16. If anyone has expenses related to the garden that they want to get reimbursed for, please give them to Maria Camara along with the receipts and you payment info and SSN.

**Update on Winter Activities:**

* GARDEN MAINTENANCE: In the Spring, Fern will repair the gate (warped because of weather) and we need to look at whether the tops to the cold frames are operating properly (one was partially up and the other down all fall; Maureen’s husband tried to adjust it but it wouldn’t adjust). Tim found 1 vole last fall, we need to continue to set the traps during the spring until they are eliminated from the garden.
* SOIL TEST: Discussion ensued of whether the “above optimum” results were detrimental, and it was concluded that we just don’t need to add manure, etc. as we did before. An N application (such as the small bag of blood meal we applied last Spring) will again be applied. John challenged the Interns to assess the results of the minor nutrients and what action, if any, should be taken.
* MEMBERSHIP LIST: The list was passed around for everyone to make changes/additions.
* 2010 ANNUAL REPORT and GARDEN JOURNAL: Maureen is working on these and hopes to have them done by the next meeting

**New Business:**

* RUSSELL LIBRARY OUTREACH: Barbara explained that Russell Library would like some of us to discuss organic and container gardening April 12 Noon-1. About 20 or so people (generally retirement age) usually attend these “brown bag” sessions. Chantal will lead the effort; Maureen will provide Barbara with a blurb by March 1; participants will be Chantal; John (composting); Jamie (container gardening, if schedule permits); Barbara. We’ll use the trifolds we created for the fairs and other handouts/hands-on examples. Flowers, herbs, and vegetables will be covered.
* NEW INTERN CLASS: Maureen and Chantal will give a PPT presentation about the Focus Group to the Class on March 8 at noon. Other Focus group members are welcome to attend.
* CMGA SYMPOSIUM: John discussed some of the speakers and encouraged everyone to sign up if they haven’t already. Interns are eligible for member pricing and payment/registration can be done online this year.
* MARCH PLANTINGS: Marsha will buy sugar snap peas and John/Fern will till/amend the soil along the inside of the fence. We’ll coordinate work via email/Website, depending on the snow melt, etc. Traditional pea planting day is March 17.
* SUMMER PLANNING: At the March meeting, we’ll plan the summer crops. Fern indicated he’ll bring in concrete reinforcing wire to experiment with cucumber trellising for easier access to cukes. Barbara mentioned that we might want to focus on disease-resistant varieties (tomatoes, peppers, etc) and also use sanitary maintenance methods. Maureen will bring in the crop layout sheets so we can draw in our plans.

**Next Meeting is March 25, 6:30 pm.** Marsha volunteered to bring refreshments.

Meeting ended at 7:30 pm.

Submitted by,

Maureen Gillis