

## **EMG Southeast Chapter Meeting, June 2, 2024**

**In attendance:** Little Tree, John Couleur, Janet Spencer, Bartlett Leber (presenter on Willing Hands)

Little Tree hosted the session on Google Meet and called the meeting to order at 7:04 p.m.

### **Treasurer's Report**

There is no change in the report from the last meeting.

The group discussed the issue of including the actual account balance in the meeting minutes. Deb Heleba has agreed to take the amount out when submitting the minutes to UVM if asked to do so.

Little Tree called for a vote and the group voted to include the amount in the minutes going forward.

### **Minutes of the May Meeting**

These were distributed to members in advance of the meeting, so were not read.

### **General Discussion**

- Little Tree posed a question to the group: Do people want to continue having monthly meetings over the course of the summer? It may be challenging for people to attend every meeting, due to summer schedules – but the group agreed it would be good to keep the monthly cadence in place.
- As a new intern, John asked for a bit more onboarding information (history of the chapter, list of current projects by area, etc.). Janet mentioned being interested in the same information. Little Tree agreed to send out the information to all Chapter members in the near future.

### **Project Updates**

Bartlett Leber, a Master Gardener for over a decade, walked through her project at Willing Hands, in Thetford, VT (Windsor County). Founded by a produce manager at the Hanover Coop roughly twenty years ago, Willing Hands is an organization that participates in food recovery and gleaning from farms (harvesting surplus produce) in order to keep food out of landfills and compost heaps and put it in the hands of people who need it.

There are more than 800 volunteers working in the organization, logging more than 3,000 hours of service (note that this figure includes others but mostly those working in Cedar Circle).

In 2023, Willing Hands distributed almost 1,000,000 pounds of food! It is comprised of more than 80 different grocery stores, wholesalers and farmers all donating food to this organization – and the same volume of social service agencies and food pantries receive the produce.

The Willing Hands Garden at Cedar Circle in East Thetford is the EMG approved program, which is part of the larger system. Key points made:

- Started about 15 years ago by a Master Gardener, it is located on about 2.5 acres and produces about 40,000 pounds of food each year.
- The focus is on building community, educating people and growing food that people can use.
- The team there seeds almost all their own plants. Crops grown include onions, butternut squash, cabbages, romaine lettuce, etc. And there is a greenhouse at the facility growing rotation crops all summer.
- This is a no-till garden, with permanent rows and established foot paths both of which benefit soil improvement. Situated on the banks of the CT river, the soil is very sandy and worn out from years of farming. Efforts are made through use of cover crops, green manure, etc. to enhance the soil.
- There are three regular gardening sessions each week: 2 hours each on Saturday morning, Tuesday morning and Thursday evening.

Bartlett extended an invitation to all to join the efforts at Cedar Circle and Willing Hands.

The meeting was adjourned at roughly 7:49 pm. Little Tree made a motion to close the meeting, and Janet seconded the motion.

### **Next Meeting**

July 7, 7 to 8 p.m.

Little Tree will solicit additional ideas for topics and presenters.

Meeting minutes respectfully submitted by Janet Spencer on June 9, 2024.