

# **WORCESTER COUNTY HORTICULTURAL SOCIETY 179<sup>th</sup> ANNUAL MEETING OF MEMBERS**

**JUNE 17, 2020**

Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the 179th Annual Meeting was held as a Zoom virtual meeting. Jim Karadimos, President, Rick Leif, Secretary, Tom Halpin, Trustee, Grace Elton, CEO, and Suzanne Hauerstein, Coordinator of Volunteer Services, made their presentations on site at Tower Hill Botanic Garden. Mike Machnowski, Assistant Treasurer, Dix Leeson, Vice President, and Frank Reece, Vice President made their presentations virtually. Members attended the meeting virtually and at the time they registered for the meeting they cast proxy votes for approval of the minutes for the 178th Annual Meeting and for the slate of Trustees and Officers.

Jim Karadimos, the Society's President, welcomed the Society's members to its Annual Meeting and called the meeting to order at 4:05pm.

Rick Leif, the Society's Secretary, reported that 98 members registered to attend the meeting satisfying the quorum requirement. A motion was made and seconded to approve waiving the reading of the minutes for the 178th Annual Meeting. Mr. Leif reported that 84 proxy votes were in favor of waiving the reading of the minutes and the motion is approved. A motion was made and seconded to approve the minutes for the 178th Annual Meeting. Mr. Leif reported that 90 proxy votes were in favor of approving the minutes and the motion is approved.

Mike Machnowski, Assistant Treasurer, presented the Treasurer's report. He reported that that Tower Hill Botanic Garden had achieved excellent financial results in Fiscal Year 2020 (April 1, 2019 to March 31, 2020) through the month of February 2020. The garden then was forced to close during the month of March 2020 due to the Covid-19 pandemic and revenue fell significantly below budget for the month of March. In spite of this problem, the organization still reported a small operating profit as of March 31, 2020, the end of the fiscal year (total revenue of \$5,079,535 compared to total expenses of \$5,078,918). Total revenue for FY2020 was 7.4% better than achieved in the prior year and, of this revenue, earned revenue showed a 16% gain over the prior year. FY2020 marked the third consecutive year that Tower Hill Botanic Garden reported an operating profit. The Endowment lost \$1.1 million of its value (6%) during the market downturn in March, but has recovered most of that loss as of June 16, 2020. Although we expect to report an operating loss for FY2021, we entered the year with tremendous momentum from our growth in previous years and we feel we will endure the issues presented by Covid-19 and will continue to prosper.

In the President's report, Mr. Karadimos stated that Nature continues to stand strong in the face of Covid-19 and due to the extraordinary effort of our staff, Tower Hill Botanic Garden continues to be a beautiful and inspiring venue. Plants will thrive after a period of dormancy and Tower Hill will do the same. All involved, Trustees, Staff, Volunteers, and Members are rising

to the challenges now before us and Tower Hill will continue to be a world-class landscape where people can connect with plants.

Dix Leeson, Chair of the Development Committee, presented an update on the Garden Resiliency Fund campaign. This campaign was developed to raise funds to offset the loss of revenue due to the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic and has a goal of raising \$500,000 by July 31, 2020. To date, \$318,000 has been donated by 232 households. The Advancement staff continues to contact prospective donors in order to achieve the goal of the campaign.

In the CEO report, Ms. Elton expressed her appreciation to the members joining this virtual Annual Meeting. She expressed her appreciation to the staff for the resiliency they have shown in dealing with the challenges presented by Covid-19. The Horticulture Team and Facilities team have done an excellent job maintaining our gardens and buildings. During the time of our closure, the Horticulture team has installed wonderful new plantings and reorganized some of the gardens to make them even more attractive and interesting to our visitors. The Education Team has developed many new virtual experiences for our audiences. The Back Office staff has worked effectively from home to keep all of our administrative functions on track. The Garden reopened on May 29 under restrictions ordered by the Governor. As these restrictions are eased, we will make our gardens, programs, and facilities available to a growing number of visitors.

During FY2020, 167,606 visitors came to Tower Hill and our membership was 8,881 households. 45,177 visitors attend our Night Lights celebration between Thanksgiving and the end of 2019. Our volunteers contributed 10,204 hours of work on many different projects. During FY2020 we increased the number of accessible pathways in the Garden and increased events meant to be more inclusive and attract new visitors.

Tom Halpin, chair of the Strategic Planning Committee, presented an update on the recently completed Five Year Strategic Plan. The Committee interviewed a number of consulting companies to guide our development of the Plan and ultimately selected Trepwise to partner with us. Focus groups were held with staff, members, volunteers and others in the community not currently associated with Tower Hill to gain information about the strengths and weaknesses of Tower Hill and opportunities for new initiatives. A day-long meeting with the Trustees was held to help formulate ideas for the future direction of the garden. After this information gathering was complete, the Committee and consultants worked to develop and complete the Strategic Plan. Ms. Elton then reviewed the Vision, Mission, and Values as contained in the Plan and summarized the actions that will need to be taken to implement the recommendations in the Plan.

Frank Reece was asked to give his report as chair of the Governance Committee. He presented for approval the following recommendations of the Governance Committee:

To serve a second three-year term as Trustees ending in 2023

Howard Jacobson, Dix Leeson, Martha Pappas, Steve Pitcher

To serve a first three-year term as Trustee ending in 2023

Samantha McDonald, Matthew Beaton, Susan Palatucci

To serve a one year term as Trustees ending in 2021 to continue serving as an Officer  
Rick Leif, Frank Reece, Jim Karadimos, Shirley Williams

To serve as Officers of the Society

President	James Karadimos
Treasurer	Mike Machnowski
Secretary	Rick Leif
First Vice President	Lisa McDonough
Vice President	Kent Russell
Vice President	Frank Reece
Vice President	Matt Mattus
Vice President	Dix Leeson
Vice President	Shirley Williams
Vice President	Mike Pagano

To serve on the Governance Committee

Kent Russell chair, Curtis Falzoi, Abe Haddad,  
Pat Gray, John Lee, Matt Beaton, Jim Karadimos

Trustee Emerita

Penny Booth

Retiring Trustees

David Boeri, David Kirchner, Satya Mitra, Barbara Morse

A motion was made and seconded to approve the slate of nominees for Trustees and Officers and Trustee Emerita as recommended by the Governance Committee. Mr. Leif reported that there were 85 proxy votes in favor of this motion and the motion is approved.

Mr. Karadimos recognized retiring Trustees David Boeri, David Kirchner, Satya Mitra, and Barbara Morse and thanked them for their outstanding service to the Society.

Mr. Karadimos paid tribute to Trustees Emeriti Dick Dearborn, John Stoddard, and Paul Rogers who passed away since the last Annual Meeting.

Mr. Karadimos announced that Tommy Dearborn and Jean McDonough have been named Honorary Trustees of the Society.

The recipients of awards from the Society were then announced.

Ms. Hauerstein announced that Frank Bissett was chosen for the Volunteer of the Year Award.

Ms. Elton announced the recipients of the Community Greening Award, given to recognize organizations that accomplished significant horticultural projects in the community.

Award recipients are:

The Worcester Garden Club for the Green Hill Park Arboretum.

Ivonne Perez, Joanne Jaber Gauvin, and Adam Saltzman for the Chandler Magnet School and

Worcester State University Community Garden.  
Paula Bushey and Denise Bilotta for the Newton Square Rotary.  
Bemis Farms for Hanging Baskets in the Spencer Business District.  
Mr. Karadimos reported that the Silver Medal, the highest award presented by the Society, has been named the John Trexler Silver Medal to honor the memory of John Trexler, founding Executive Director of Tower Hill Botanic Garden. He then announced that the recipient of the John Trexler Silver Medal is Jeremy O'Connell, Trustee Emeritus, and past President of the Society.

With no further business to be completed, Mr. Karadimos declared the Annual Meeting adjourned at 4:55pm.

Respectfully submitted,

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Richard A. Leif, Secretary