

CITY OF COOS BAY CITY COUNCIL
Agenda Staff Report

MEETING DATE	AGENDA ITEM NUMBER
August 18, 2015	

TO: Mayor Shoji and City Councilors

FROM: Rodger Craddock, City Manager

ISSUE: Mayor's Appreciation Award to Choshi Garden Volunteers

BACKGROUND:

On May 7, 2002 former Mayor Joe Benetti instituted the "Mayor's Appreciation Award" in an effort to formally recognize citizens for their extraordinary contributions to our community. The recipients of the award to date are as follows:

- | | |
|----------------|--|
| June 2002 | Awarded to Gloria Hillstrom in appreciation of her vision and dedication in the development of Choshi Gardens in Mingus Park. |
| November 2004 | Awarded to Chuck Knight in appreciation for his thirty-eight years of service to the City during which in addition to his various positions within the police department he served as the interim city manager on two different occasions. |
| March 2006 | Awarded to Gus Langlely for his years of service to the City while serving on the Public Safety Committee, Planning Commission and Parks Commission. |
| November 2006 | Awarded to Teri Whitty for her contributions to community activities and projects in the City which included the Coos Art Museum, Historical Museum and the SMART reading program. |
| November 2006 | Awarded to John Whitty for his contributions to community activities and projects in the City which included the construction and operation of the Bay Area Hospital and his service related to State and local transportation committees. |
| January 2009 | Awarded to Becky Soules for her dedication and service to the community involving the Marshfield Pioneer Cemetery. |
| September 2014 | Awarded to the Egyptian Theatre Preservation Association and its members for to restore, preserve, reopen and once again manage the Egyptian Theatre. |
| July 2015 | Awarded to Cricket Soules for her advocacy and tireless energy to restore and preserve the Marshfield Pioneer Cemetery. |

Recently Mayor Shoji expressed a desire to recognize all the Choshi Garden volunteers for their tireless energy to create, preserve, and beautify the Choshi Gardens.

Per an article in the December 5, 2001 edition of the World Newspaper, Beverly (Bev) Meyers saw potential in a "swamp" above Mingus Pond. Bev, her mother Gloria Hillstrom, along with several other volunteer gardeners starting in the early 1990's, transformed the "swamp" muck into what is today Choshi Gardens with its series of ponds, creeks, and other garden elements. Throughout the years, there have been many other volunteers including the Boy Scouts, Rotary, Bonsai Club, Garden Clubs, and Citizens of the community. Today, Bev and husband Sonny along with current volunteers Ursula & Lewis Langley, Ann Bellomy, and Susan Murphy continue to faithfully maintain and improve Choshi Gardens.

An example of the work the volunteers do include:

- Bev walks all corners of Choshi three times a week picking up litter, beer cans; and leaf blowing from top of maintenance road to red bridge, bamboo, and upper trail.
- Maintenance of road's full length is done each week - About twice a week in the fall. It takes about 45 minutes and a full tank of gas each time the garden gets blown. In the fall, it takes two tanks of gas; and gas is hauled each trip. They don't always blow the leaves into the forest, but they get blown into piles; and Sonny comes on weekends and helps tarp and hauls them off.
- Lewis and Sonny generally man the weed eater and/or chainsaw and do the hauling of brush etc.
- Ursula and Bev do trimming and hand cutting, and the new volunteers Ann Bellomy and Susan Murphy do the weeding, helping with cutting, and hauling brush.
- Constant state of refurbishment and maintaining the creek by hauling and placing rocks, removing gravel, and draining creek of rock/gravel dam. They also are tending the bamboo with tying up by strapping, and they are always removing litter, beer cans, broken bamboo, paper mess, clothes, backpack, bikes, and the corners being used as toilets mostly from transient problems.

Below is data on the volunteers yearly hours they worked in Choshi Gardens the last three years:

- 2015 – 393 hrs. (so far)
- 2014 – 358 hrs.
- 2013 – 415 hrs.

Example of Hours reported for July 2015 were 87 (Average monthly hours approximately 51)

There is an Independent Contract between Bev and the City where Bev is compensated monthly from monetary distribution of the Tom and Gloria Hillstrom Fund. This Fund is held in trust by the Oregon Community Foundations. Bev's compensation increases or decrease based on the annual distribution from the fund. The fund was established in 1998, and proceeds were first distributed in 1999. Bev has received payment of the interest from the trust anywhere from \$175 to \$215 a month -- at the end of the years-- that is about \$2-4 an hour.

Bev has an impressive skill set she brings to bear as the leader of Choshi Garden volunteers. Her skills include:

- Landscape Contractor
- Design
- Master Gardner
- Organizer of volunteers, work parties, ordering materials
- Substitutes as "Park Host" by inviting the public to share in Choshi's beauty
- "Shovels and wheelbarrows will travel"

