

From: Zerene Soans
Sent: Friday, January 15, 2021 12:35 PM
To: Debbie Younkin <Debbie.Younkin@cityofsanrafael.org>
Subject: Re: Community Garden Guidelines - updates

Thank you for the clarifications. I am pleased with the new guidelines and a volunteer community committee sounds good and will work more efficiently, as the work load will get divided between gardeners who choose to volunteer as per their capability and interest.

Take care.

Zerene Soans.

On Fri, Jan 15, 2021, 12:24 PM Meredith Pike-Baky wrote:
Hi Shirley and all,

Yes, I received the recent email from Debbie and think it's a positive step. I'd like clarification on the terms we're using: **Volunteer Working Group** is preferable to Steering Committee in my opinion and only needs its roles/responsibilities detailed. I also prefer the term **Guidelines** to Rules. It looks like these terms are in use and in place already. Perhaps we can add a shared decision-making agreement and establish shared governance this way.

Meredith

On Jan 15, 2021, at 12:07 PM, Shirley Fischer wrote:

Hello garden friends,

Did you receive this email today? (It came to me and to Jerry, and I wonder who else received it.)

Also do you have an email for _____ and _____? I hope they will be informed about the upcoming meetings Sunday and Thursday.

They may want to attend even though I think their issue has been resolved by the changes in the Garden Guidelines noted below.

According to the staff report for the Thursday meeting, a grandfather sentence has also been added for our family's two-plot garden.

I welcome these changes, although I do not think they address the larger issue of collaborative garden governance.

Looking forward to Sunday's meeting.
--Shirley

From: Carissa Brands

Date: January 19, 2021 at 7:20:49 PM PST

To: Susan Andrade-Wax <Susan.AndradeWax@cityofsanrafael.org>, Lindsay Lara <Lindsay.Lara@cityofsanrafael.org>, Terra Linda Pool <TerraLindaPool@cityofsanrafael.org>, Catherine Quffa <Catherine.Quffa@cityofsanrafael.org>

Subject: Comments for SR Parks and Recreation Commission meeting 21 January 2021

19 January 2021

To: San Rafael Parks and Recreation Commission

Re: Community Garden Regulations and San Rafael Parks and Recreation meeting 21 January 2021

My name is Carissa and I am a plot holder at the Terra Linda Community garden and am submitting my public comments by email for the agenda item about the Proposed Garden Guidelines.

First, I believe that we, the garden plot holders, deserve to have a garden steering committee that works with the SR Parks and Recreation Commission to establish guidelines and address issues that arise within the garden. I believe that we need to put the "community" back in to "community garden." I propose that the Proposed Garden Guidelines from the SR Parks and Recreation Commission **not** be adopted until this is established.

We are members of a community of gardeners with an abundance of skills, knowledge, experiences, and degrees that can work together to solve problems and issues and can work with the SR Parks and Recreation to make the garden a place of fairness, justice, health, beauty, sustainability, and so much more. Everyone has something to teach and to learn. Top-down rules do not work well in this context, as there are more and better solutions than there are problems. We could become an example for other community gardens, but not under the top-down management proposed by the Parks and Recreation Commission.

Second, I believe that everyone that is currently in the garden should be able to keep their plot if they have to move to another city or town, of course with the expectation that they can still maintain it properly. I believe that if the Parks and Recreation Commission proposes, that anyone who joins the garden from 2021 and in the future should have to give up their plot if they move (not current plot holders). Also, for those that currently hold plots at both TL and Canal, they should be grand-mothered in as well.

If the problem is that the wait list is long, then one solution is to have more community gardens. As our economy declines and climate change worsens, we need more local food production to take the pressure off of importing such basic necessities. Over 70% of world food production is grown by small and middle-sized growers. Also, community

gardens are extremely diverse, hosting habitat for our threatened pollinator species, heritage vegetables and flowers, etc. The seeds are literally in our hands.

Lastly, I believe that it should be the work of the steering committee to address very specific rules in the garden, working as the garden representatives with the Parks and Recreation Commission. Imposing rules only frustrates and divides a community. Very specific and detailed regulations are unnecessary to state, as they can be worked out at the committee level.

Thank you for the opportunity to hear my comments and please, consider them as you vote for the Proposed Garden Guidelines.

Sincerely,

Carissa Brands

Terra Linda Community
Gardeners
January, 2021

~~Attention: San Rafael Parks and Recreation Committee~~
~~Comments~~ submitted for review for ~~1-21-2021~~ Meeting January 21, 2021

To ~~San Rafael Parks and Recreation Commission~~ ~~tee~~ Whom It May Concern:

~~This letter contains a list of requests from A group of~~ Terra Linda Community Garden members ~~working toward an improved community garden and a more collaborative working relationship~~ relationship with the City of San Rafael. We met ~~twice in January via zoom for two consecutive Sunday's (1-10 and 1-17)~~ to discuss the changes to the Proposed Terra Linda Community Garden (TLCG) and Canal Garden (CG) Guidelines. All gardeners in the Terra Linda Community Garden were invited to attend both meetings. Members who attended were invited ~~The first working group of six members centered around 5 key points that were than brought to the next meeting, with an additional 9 members joining in. Each member was allowed to contribute their concerns and all agreed to sign this letter. A copy of this letter is being sent to all TLCG gardeners before-~~ the January 21 meeting.

We have agreed on several key ~~topics of concerns that we want to share with you.~~

1. ~~In general,~~ the Terra Linda Community Garden and the Canal Garden are very different and have ~~different contrasting~~ needs that cannot be adequately addressed by applying one set of guidelines to both gardens. One size does not always fit all in this case.

For example: The proposed new rule regarding crops shading neighbors' gardens may seem to impact the Canal Garden more than the Terra Linda Community Garden. Does this rule need to apply to both? How can the rules be better tailored for each garden? How do we ensure enforcement to avoid confrontation between gardeners who disagree? We would like to review the Draft Proposed Guidelines (DPG) to make sure the ~~application of~~ guidelines ~~is-are~~ actually useful-appropriate for each garden and ~~creates~~ increase productive function rather than unnecessary limitations in either garden.

2. There is a long history of collaborative governance and self-help at the TLCG. [please refer to "A Brief History of the Terra Linda Garden" submitted by gardener Shirley Fischer.] Since its creation by a group of citizens who formed an agreement with the Dixie School District and the City in 1975, the Terra Linda Garden has had a Garden Steering Committee, which has coordinated activities such as building a fence around the Garden, clearing rocks (which were used elsewhere by the City), holding periodic ~~G~~ Garden maintenance work days, gardener newsletters, annual meetings and potlucks, seed swaps, tool sharing, informational bulletin boards posted with events, ideas, & recipes, guest speakers from Marin Master Gardeners and our own garden members, and donating extra produce ~~to local nonprofits~~ -in recent years 700-900 lbs. of food were given/donated to local food banks. As food insecurity becomes a bigger problem for our county, we feel we could make even more contributions in this area with better planning. We request a bigger role in garden governance.

~~±~~ Therefore, unlike what is presented in the staff report, there is a substantial number of gardeners in the TLCG who are interested in participating ~~on~~ the TL Garden Steering Committee; ~~to increase both garden~~ activities for gardeners and participation ~~by gardeners~~ in garden governance. The City has not responded to this interest expressed by gardeners and has repeatedly canceled TL Garden Steering Committee meetings for over a year.

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As a group, we would like to know: why is this happening? We are eager to change this dynamic with city management.

For example: Numerous questionnaires were sent out by Debbie Younkin in the last few years asking who would like to be involved with the Steering Committee. At least 12, maybe more, gardeners ~~Many of us~~ indicated ~~we they~~ wanted to be involved ~~(at least 12 gardeners)~~, but there was never any follow up from Ms. Younkin ~~to continue the process~~ despite our frequent inquiries. ~~In~~ the December 17th ~~staff meeting, the staff~~ report described a "...general lack of interest in serving on the committee. Plot holders do not have the time needed that a Steering Committee requires". ~~In~~ the most recent January 15th email from Ms. Younkin, ~~she states~~ again that "Moving forward the hope is to move away from a Steering Committee and over to a volunteer working group...Over the last ten years it has been difficult generating new interest for the Steering Committee, yet there has been interest in creating more opportunities in the Garden for other initiatives." We feel this interpretation is misleading to the ~~Commission~~ ~~ssion~~, as our experience in the garden indicates a robust community of members ~~who want~~ing to participate in the overall improved functioning of the garden and ~~creat~~ing more opportunities. We'd like to, but doing this through a newly elected Steering Committee. **We (urgently) propose strongly believe that a list of interested gardeners should be voted elected on by TLCG gardeners and that the TL Garden Steering Committee should be reactivated.**

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- The TLCG Bylaws state that the Garden Steering Committee "shall have general responsibility to manage the affairs and operations of the Terra Linda Community Garden and to adopt rules and policies for the garden." The proposed rules ~~you the Commission is~~ are considering ~~tonight~~ were not discussed or adopted by the TL Garden Steering Committee. Gardeners in the TLCG did not have the opportunity ~~ies~~ to see the proposed changes until an email announcing the finalized draft was sent in December, 2020. ~~For example:~~ The proposed change from our present Garden Steering Committee system of self-governance to an ad hoc "volunteer working group" is in direct opposition to both our history as a community garden and to our present level of ~~willingness-readiness~~ to participate in the Garden Steering Committee. To make a change of this magnitude, ~~in changing~~ both the name and function of the Garden Steering Committee, should require approval of two-thirds of the garden membership, as specified in the TLCG Bylaws. We ask: ~~why this has not been done?~~ that the TLCG Bylaws be upheld and followed.
- We are a highly experienced and knowledgeable group of gardeners who are motivated to continue the TLG's 45-year tradition of community-~~c~~ity collaboration. There is a

vibrant culture of cooperation and self-help at the TL Garden, which we also want to see continued in ~~the~~ Garden governance.

For example: During this year of COVID, there have been no ~~c~~City-organized clean-up days or gardener activities. ~~Yet~~ Instead, there has been more maintenance of common areas, more gardeners helping other gardeners who couldn't work in their plots for health reasons, more gardeners relying on socially distanced connections with other gardeners and with the earth to stay social, helpful and productive in a safe way. The garden has been functioning quite well during this year with gardener-to-gardener help and limited ~~c~~City involvement. As is evidenced nationwide, the pandemic has strengthened our community resolve, not diminished it.

~~For example:~~ Terra Linda Community Garden members ~~want to be at the table~~ request participation during all discussions of any proposed guidelines, as specified in our written By-Laws. We ask the ~~Commission~~, "How many of the people writing the Garden Guidelines have actual gardening experience?" When the Guidelines are drafted by non-gardeners and gardeners are not part of the process, many gardener-driven ideas are never made part of the Guidelines, and some guidelines are created that are not beneficial to ~~the~~ gardeners. Such a lack of shared governance ~~Our members say this~~ promotes a host of uncomfortable feelings; confusion, frustration, and misunderstandings. For example, one communication from the City was misworded to indicate that all plantings had to be removed from gardens during the winter. Several of us who had many perennial plantings (those that stay in the ground all year long) asked for clarification, and we were told that yes, the wording mis-represented the City's intent, and that perennials could stay for the winter. Sadly, this clarification did not come before one of our new members, an herbalist and Botany educator, had acted on the misworded command and, wanting to comply, pulled up his entire collection of prized perennial plantings and rare herbs. It was heartbreaking for all of us. There are additional guidelines that are punitive or hostile. Gardeners would like to have a voice in clarifying these rules.

5. Gardeners in the Terra Linda Community Garden have a wide variety of experience and expertise in principled agronomy, Permaculture, Nutrition, habitat improvement, environmental impacts, invasive plant mitigation, flood control, professional landscaping, ~~and~~ contracting, and master gardening. We want ~~this our~~ experiences to be utilized in finding solutions to the garden challenges we face, 2.

Issues raised at the 1-10 and 1-17 gardener meetings that could be addressed by a reactivated TL Garden Steering Committee include:

- improved communication between gardeners and ~~c~~City staff
- access to better and updated rosters of our members
- ongoing theft and security issues at the garden including needed fence repairs that give access to outsiders
- solving our Rodent pressure, weed pressure and invasive weed problems--developing a plan, using outside community resources when needed
- bathroom access, particularly during COVID restrictions
- possibilities for having a Community Tool Shed

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- flood mitigation measures to address ongoing flooding issues in several plots during the rainy season
- better water conservation methods, researching successful use of drip irrigation and timers, well-maintained hose fittings, and evaluation of the Garden water system, including backflow devices
- possibilities for utilizing the Garden as an education hub for ongoing science-based programs to teach gardening, regenerative agriculture, botany, biology
- better signage with City contact numbers, no dumping at the dumpster, locking the gates, no trespassing etc.
- discussion of the budget of the Garden, where our dues go and fundraising opportunities to finance garden projects
- investigation of possibilities for expanding community gardens in San Rafael to meet the needs of those waiting to obtain a garden plot

5.6. Section A #2 of the proposed Garden Guidelines needs to be reconsidered. Although we were glad to have clarification that our long-time, non-residential members would be allowed to stay in the Garden, ***we believe that all current gardeners should be grandfathered into this policy.*** Some current gardeners may be forced to move as they grow older or as finances and other family circumstances change due to Covid. The investment of time, physical work and money in even a year-old plot is very significant for each gardener. If one of us moves within Marin County and is close enough to continue the plot's upkeep, as described in our past and current guidelines, we think that this investment should be respected and honored. We believe the new rule should apply only to "new" gardeners coming into the Garden after the guidelines have been adopted. These new gardeners can make their investment decisions based on the new guideline, taking into account that if they move, they will have to give up their plot the following year. We think this rule should not be applied retroactively to existing gardeners.

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6.7. For all these reasons, we recommend that the Commission postpone approval of the Draft Proposed Garden Guidelines at this time.

Before the Committee takes any further action on these Guidelines, it is imperative the following steps are taken, in accordance with the current Terra Linda Community Garden Bylaws.

- a) An election of the 2021 Terra Linda Garden Steering Committee by the membership of the Terra Linda Community Garden as soon as possible.**
- b) Review and discussion by the 2021 Terra Linda Garden Steering Committee of proposed changes to the Garden Guidelines.**
- c) Review and discussion of the Proposed Guidelines by the Garden Steering Committee and the City staff to come to consensus and then submit to the Parks and Recreation Commission for approval or consider an amendment to the TL Garden Bylaws, if needed.**

We ask that our renewed participation be welcomed by the Commission to fortify better communication and improved relations with the City and most importantly, to encourage the management of a vigorous and successful Community Garden.

The Terra Linda Community Garden continues to be a vital resource for individuals physically, emotionally and socially; this could not be more evident than during the pandemic this past year. We, as members, value equally the garden, our membership and our participation with the City enormously, and we thank you for your consideration of these recommendations.

We look forward to Thursday's meeting.

Most sincerely,

Maureen Donohoe Bridget Donohoe Tracey Hoffman Zerene Soans

Shirley Fischer Rodita Barnes Carissa Brands Jane McKechnie

Amy Robinson Karen Romanko Carol Mack Patty

Meredith Pike-Baky Rebecca Bowler Kathleen Payne and David

The Raja family