



PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION AGENDA REPORT

MEETING DATE: NOVEMBER 16, 2011

ITEM NUMBER: 10b

SUBJECT: COMMUNITY GARDENS

DATE: NOVEMBER 4, 2011

FROM: PUBLIC SERVICES DEPARTMENT/RECREATION DIVISION

PRESENTATION BY: DONNA THERIAULT, MANAGEMENT ANALYST

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: DONNA THERIAULT, MANAGEMENT ANALYST, AT
714-754-5636**

RECOMMENDATION

Provide staff direction for possible recommendations to City Council.

BACKGROUND

At the September 28, 2011 Commission meeting a request was made to provide information regarding the City's Community Garden history, rules and enforcement/reassignment processes.

The City has two community gardens with a total of 102 parcels. The Del Mar Community Garden on Del Mar Avenue has been in existence for over 10 years and has 60 garden parcels approximately 15 feet by 15 feet in size. The Hamilton Community Garden on Hamilton Street was established in 2004 and it has 42 parcels of the same dimension. The parcels are rented by residents and non-residents for growing vegetables, flowers, fruits and plants. The cost to rent a parcel from January to December is \$30.00 for residents, \$60.00 for non-residents, and a one-time \$20 key deposit. Each calendar year, gardeners pay the annual fee and sign an acknowledgement that they have read and will abide by the current garden Agreement (Attachment 1) and By-Laws (Attachment 2). Both gardens are managed and monitored by the Management Analyst in the Recreation Division.

The gardeners must provide the labor, tools, seeds, plants and all other supplies, materials and equipment necessary to work and maintain the parcel, aisles and common areas. The City provides the irrigation, trash dumpster service, portable toilet service, and tree chipping (mulch) deliveries. City maintenance staff maintains the irrigation systems, fencing, kiosks, and entrance gates.

ANALYSIS

Garden parcels are held for a 12-month period, January to December and must be renewed annually. In November, the Management Analyst prepares renewal packets that are sent to all 102 gardeners. If the parcel is not renewed by the December deadline date, the parcel will be assigned to the next person on the wait list. Currently, each garden has a two-year wait list with 20-25 names on each list.

Parcel fees are not pro-rated. Therefore, if a parcel is abandoned anytime after September 30th, staff will normally leave the parcel vacant until the annual renewal process in December. If a parcel were to be reassigned in October, November or early December, the applicant will pay \$30 at the time of parcel assignment and then will owe another \$30 a few weeks or months later for the next year's renewal.

Throughout the year, the Management Analyst will inspect the gardens to make sure the gardeners are complying with the garden Agreement and By-Laws. Staff will notify the gardeners by e-mail or telephone of any violations noted during the inspection. If the violation is not corrected within two (2) weeks of the date of notification, a second contact is made. Contacts will continue until the violation is corrected or 3 warning/correction contacts have been made. After the 3rd contact, a termination notice is sent via e-mail, telephone or letter and the parcel is reassigned to the next person on the wait list. The reassignment process can take as long as 2 months depending on the response from the existing gardener and the person on the wait list.

Routinely, the gardeners will dispute the violations noted during an inspection and will contact staff or management to discuss the violations and outcomes. Gardeners will, in most cases, request an extension of time to tend to the garden violation. Various reasons are given by the gardeners for the lack of gardening activity on their part. With budget and staffing cut backs, the gardens have not been inspected as often as desired.

In addition to garden inspections, annual renewals and reassignments, the Management Analyst handles the following garden duties:

- ◆ Resolves complaints from the gardeners or the garden neighbors.
- ◆ Responds to e-mails and phone calls requesting placement on the wait list or for garden information.
- ◆ Works with the Costa Mesa Sanitary District on planning composting workshops.
- ◆ Distributes Master Gardener educational workshop information.
- ◆ Conducts tours of the garden for interested groups or students.
- ◆ Organizes non-profit clean-up events when available.
- ◆ Works with the surrounding residents and homeowner's associations for vine and shrub encroachment and fence damage repair.
- ◆ Request needed maintenance/pest control services, mulch deliveries, and monitors the contracts for the portable toilet service.

Staff has contacted several surrounding cities and requested information on their garden operations (Attachment 3). The cities of Dana Point, Garden Grove, Orange, and Irvine have city owned and operated community gardens. The cities of Newport Beach, Huntington Beach, Fullerton and Santa Ana have community gardens on city owned or other public property that are managed and operated by non-profit organizations, clubs or committees. The City of Fountain Valley does not have a community garden.

ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED

Commissioners could choose to receive and file the report and take no further action.

LEGAL REVIEW

No legal review required on this item.

FISCAL REVIEW

The City provides approximately \$20,600 per year or \$200 per parcel to operate the two gardens. The majority of the cost is for staff time spent managing, inspecting, and maintaining the gardens. Revenue collected from the garden fees is \$3,450 per year.

CONCLUSION

The City of Costa Mesa has two (2) community gardens with a total of 102 parcels assigned to community members. Each parcel is renewed on an annual basis. During the year, City staff monitors the gardener's compliance with the garden Agreement and By-Laws and will reassign parcels when required.

DONNA THERIAULT
Management Analyst

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Department.

Attachments: 1. [Garden Agreement](#)
2. [Garden By-Laws](#)
3. [City Survey](#)