

March 28, 1996

SUBJECT: PROPOSED COMMUNITY GARDENS POLICY

#### RECOMMENDATION

THAT the Board approve the attached Community Gardens Policy

#### BACKGROUND

The Proposed Policy on Community Gardens has been circulated to interested groups and was the subject of a public meeting held on March 25. A copy of the minutes of this meeting is attached to this report.

#### DISCUSSION

The proposed policy commits the Board to helping groups find resource information on gardens and locate suitable sites in the City. It also describes the conditions that must apply if it is determined that a park site is to be used for a community garden.

It is the intention of the proposed policy that groups interested in establishing community gardens prepare an inventory of all land in the neighbourhood that might be suitable for such a purpose. Board staff will assist in this search.

If it is determined that a park is the only suitable site for a garden, the policy also recognizes the need to ascertain if there is neighbourhood support for the project. This is consistent with the process used for all park development projects.

As a result of the public consultation process, a number of changes have been made to the proposed policy.

1. The original proposal contained a requirement that "Use of an allotment plot cannot exceed two years. At the end of the second year, the holder of the plot can have his or her name added to the bottom of the waiting list." Garden enthusiasts objected to this clause stating that the 2 year tenure was too short in terms of the effort and commitment necessary to develop a mature plot. Members of existing gardening societies also made the point that there is a reasonable natural turn over of plot holders that occurs each year. Also, staff, in reviewing all of the material collected from Municipalities across Canada and the part of the U.S. could not find an examples of community gardens where such a clause was considered necessary. As a result this item has been deleted from the proposed policy.
2. During the consultation process many supporters of community gardens made the point that there is a difference between an "allotment garden" and a "community garden" While an allotment garden may in fact be defined as only a piece of land used by individuals to produce food and flowers for the personal use of society members, a community garden goes beyond that to include common areas that are not allotted to individuals, and education programs that involve schools and youth groups in gardening activities. As a result of this input, the definition of the policy has been changed to reflect this concept.

The proposed policy also recommends a number of specific terms that should be included in any lease with a society. The rational for these items are outline below:

- a) The term of the user agreement will not exceed five years.

When the Board has permitted an organization to operate a public facility, it has been the normal practice to limit the term of the

agreement to five years. This ensures that the Board has the ability to regularly review these operations to ensure that they are being administered in the public interest.

- b) Allotment of space must be made from a waiting list on a first come first served basis.

This condition is to insure that the allotments are made on a fair and equitable basis. The waiting list will be maintained by each operating society.

- c) Membership in the Society, and the opportunity to be allotted a plot, must be open to any resident of Vancouver.

Although the initial impetus for the establishment of a community garden usually comes as a result of local interest, parks are paid for by all residents of Vancouver, and any interested citizen should have the right to apply to receive a plot. There is opposition to the requirement from all community garden supporters. They maintain that in order for the gardens to be tended and developed and maintained to a high standard, it is crucial that the plot holders live in the community where they have easy access to the garden.

- d) No pesticides are to be used.

This is consistent with the Board's Integrated Pest Management Policy.

- e) Allotment fees charged by the Society must be approved by the General Manager.

This is to ensure that fees are kept to a reasonable limit. This is a standard clause in all agreements with groups permitted to operate Board facilities.

- f) The Society must adhere to maintenance standards set by the Board.

This is to ensure that the gardens are maintained in a manner that is consistent with the level of maintenance on the park.

- g) No barriers to general public access to the site can be erected.

The gardens must not appear to be an exclusive area where the public is made to feel unwelcome.

Prepared by:  
Recreation Division  
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