

**TO: PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION**

**FROM: DAREN ANDERSON** **DEPARTMENT: COMMUNITY SERVICES**

**DATE: FEBRUARY 25, 2020**

**SUBJECT: REVIEW OF THE COMMUNITY GARDEN PROGRAM GUIDELINES**

### **RECOMMENDATION**

Staff recommends that the Parks and Recreation Commission (Commission) review and comment on the Community Garden Guidelines (Attachment A).

### **BACKGROUND**

Community Services Department began managing the Community Garden Program in the 1970s. The program currently supports five different garden locations. Three of the gardens (Rinconada, Johnson, and Eleanor Pardee) on the north side and two gardens (Arastradero and Ventura) on the south side of Palo Alto, consisting of a total of 408 garden plots. The program has volunteer garden liaisons at each site to assist the Community Garden Coordinator with ensuring the rules of the garden are adhered to by the plot renters. All existing and new gardeners receive a license and the guidelines at the beginning of each year.

The program has had many challenges most in part due to the diversity gardening techniques and practices. The Community Garden Guidelines will help ensure that the gardeners have a safe, attractive, and well-maintained place to garden.

### **DISCUSSION**

On September 24, 2019, the Parks and Recreation Commission voted unanimously to recommend that Council adopt the revised Park and Open Space Regulations as proposed by staff and the Commission Ad Hoc Committee. Regulation R1-40, which pertains to the Community Garden Program, was edited to remove the community garden regulations that merely provided administrative details of the garden program. Regulation R1-40 was also edited to allow the Director of Community Services to promulgate guidelines for the registration and use of the community gardens.

On October 22, 2019 the Parks and Recreation Commission discussed the new Draft Community Garden Guidelines. The Community Garden Guidelines consist largely of existing practices and policies. However, the Ad Hoc Committee and staff identified opportunities to add new policies and procedures aimed at enhancing the community garden program. New guidelines were added to address issues related to communication, the acceptable use of trellises, the use of fences and gates, appropriate materials used in gardens, appropriate garden behavior, hours of operation, and violations that warrant termination of a gardener's license.

During the October 22, 2019 meeting, there was some discussion on the use of above-ground PVC pipe in the gardens. PVC pipe is used by many gardeners to make trellises and pest screening for their garden plots. One member of the public spoke at the meeting and suggested that PVC should be banned from the gardens for aesthetic and health reasons. Another member of the public explained reasons why gardeners use PVC and argued that it is a helpful, cost-effective tool for operating a garden. The Commission suggested that staff and the Ad Hoc Committee review the issue again.

Staff and the Ad Hoc Committee met with the garden liaisons and drafted the following revisions to the Garden Guidelines to address the use of PVC in the gardens:

#### IV. General Plot Responsibility

##### C. Structures, Trellises, Fencing and Garden Material

- Any new PVC trellis or other garden structure that is 3 feet or less in height is permitted.
- When PVC is permitted, neutral colors are required (e.g. green, brown, or gray, rather than white, and should be appropriately rated for outdoor use).
- Any new PVC trellis or structure exceeding 3 feet is not permitted.
- Any pre-existing PVC trellis or structure will be allowed but must be replaced with permitted material upon its deterioration (i.e. brittle, discoloration, stability), as determined by the Garden Coordinator.

The Commission also suggested condensing and reorganizing the guidelines for easier use. After multiple discussions, staff and the garden liaisons revised the headers, reorganized the content, added a table of contents, and decreased the size of the document from six pages to five by removing some unnecessary information without compromising the existing content.

The Guidelines will be sent to all participants in the City's community garden program, included with the community garden license agreement, and be posted on the Community Garden webpage.

#### **ATTACHMENTS**

Attachment A: **Community Garden Guidelines**