



Richmond Food Security Society

Community Gardens Meeting 2015

Two community gardens meetings were held on Thursday January 29th and Saturday February 7th. Over 60 community gardeners attended these two meetings. These meetings were held to discuss a new fee structure with price increases for January 2016.

In this brief, we are including some of the more important details that were presented. Over the past few years the Community Gardens program has been a drain on the Society's resources. To continue running this program effectively and expand more gardens, we will need to increase fees.

RFSS Community Gardens History

The Richmond Food Security Society (RFSS) took over the management of the gardens in 2010. Two new sites were developed in 2011, one at the south end of the Railway Corridor and another at Paulik Park. This added 66 new garden plots. In 2012 we added shared community garden/school sites, including a 12 plot site for seniors at Richmond Secondary and 17 new plots at Brighthouse Elementary School. In 2013, the Railway site was expanded by adding 14 new plots to the garden site. The gardens now total 300 plots with 300-350 gardeners.

The Society Supports the Community Gardens by:

- Sending out annual renewal notices, collecting renewal fees, etc.
- Hosting annual community garden meetings
- Filling vacant plots and maintaining a plot waitlist
- Organizing and coordinating spring/fall clean ups
- Conducting bi-monthly garden inspections
- Developing communication materials
- Publishing newsletters/ General Garden notices and a gardeners webpage
- Responding to gardener requests/ questions or concerns – emails/on site
- Liaising with the City of Richmond – re: water, leaves, mulch deliveries, bin drop off, green cart program – email/phone
- Coordinating and running garden workshops
- Applying for grants for garden improvements

Contributions by the City of Richmond

The City supports the Community Gardens program because it nurtures community connections and creates a sense of pride, supports health and wellness, encourages local food production, and provides access to healthy food.

Supports provided by the City include:

- Initial capital investment for garden start up - \$15,000
- Office space/utilities
- Materials – e.g. printing/laminating and signage
- Tools and shed maintenance
- Park land
- Water - set up, service and repairs from April – October
- Mulch deliveries – year round
- Soil deliveries – upon request in Spring
- Green cart pick up – March - October
- Green bins (Spring and Fall Garden clean up sessions)
- Promotional support
- In-kind support for upcoming garden projects

RFSS Community Garden Finances:

For the past 2 years the Society has run a deficit of \$115 (2013) and \$4,362 (2014) with the Community Gardens program. This deficit has affected how we support the program and provide maintenance at the community garden sites. There have been increases in some costs associated with the gardens (e.g. liability insurance, postal rates).

The projected deficit for 2015 is **\$5,700**.

New Fee Structure Proposals

Due to the desire for financial sustainability of the program, we are proposing a new fee structure for 2016. Two proposals were presented (see below).

Proposal One:

This fee structure raises garden fees by **\$30 for all garden plots**.

This would generate plot revenues of **\$22,850**.

Garden site	2016 fees
Brighthouse	\$50, \$60, \$75
Garratt	\$80
General Currie	\$75
Gilbert	\$80
King George	\$65
Paulik Park	\$55, \$80
Railway	\$80
Richmond High	\$50
Terra Nova	\$80

This will provide funds to support staff wages, budgets for tool maintenance and replacement, a possible hose replacement program, subsidies for low income gardeners, a contingency fund, and offsets to rising costs of insurance and the yearly mailout.

Proposal 2:

This fee structure **raises fees by plot size:**

- Small - **\$10** (up to 60sq.ft.)
- Medium - **\$20** (61- 100 sq. ft.)
- Large - **\$30** (101 + sq. ft.)

This would generate plot revenues of **\$22,320**.

Garden site	2016 fees
Brighthouse	\$30, \$55, \$80
Garratt	\$80
General Currie	\$80
Gilbert	\$80
King George	\$55
Paulik Park	\$55, \$80
Railway	\$80
Richmond High	\$30
Terra Nova	\$80

This will provide funds to support staff wages, budgets for tool maintenance and replacement, a possible hose replacement program, subsidies for low income gardeners, a contingency fund, and offsets to rising costs of insurance and the yearly mailout.

Discussion/Feedback from Gardeners

Feedback from the gardeners who attended the meeting was generally positive. There was an appreciation about having a place to discuss the upcoming changes and to be included in the process. Many were thankful for the services that the RFSS provides.

Gardeners' feedback for the additions to the budget included suggestions for a better soil source for the gardens, replacing old tools and better maintenance of the tools that are on site. However there were concerns that the extra budgeted dollars might not be enough. Suggestions solutions for this included a donor campaign to support the Community Gardens program, and possibly raising the fees higher to compensate for better products being made available.

Suggestions were made about ways for the Society could save money, including possibly going to an online registration system instead of a yearly mailout. The Society is already looking into this process for those who use email. Also, it was asked if corporate sponsorship could be a way to get more funding. This is possible but would have to be worked out with the City

Due to concerns about how subsidies could be provided, there were lengthy discussions about them. Questions were raised about how much subsidy money would be available and about how would these funds be distributed, as well as who would qualify. As such, RFSS will be working with the City of Richmond to set up the subsidy process. Another point raised was the concern that with the increase in fees, more gardeners would need to be subsidized.

The general consensus was that proposal number 2 was a better choice.

What's Next?

Until **February 27th** (extended from February 20th) we will be answering questions, accepting comments and feedback.

After the feedback period we will be providing a report to the RFSS Board of Directors with all the comments, feedback and a recommendation for the 2016 fee structure.

Decisions about fee structure will be made by the RFSS at our **2015 Annual General Meeting (AGM)** in May or early June.

Acknowledgements

We would like to thank Chris Whyte for facilitating the meetings, Tricia Buemann, Area Coordinator and Lucinda Yeung, Programs Assistant for taking notes. As well, our gratitude to the excellent presentations made by Colin Dring, Executive Director; Erika Simms, Programs Coordinator; and Marie Fenwick, Manager Parks Programs.

Our appreciation is extended to both East Richmond Community Association and to the Steveston Community Association for their use of space.

A final and heartfelt thank you to all the gardeners and community members that came out to these meetings to provide feedback and share their thoughts and support to RFSS and the City.

Contacts

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