



**City of Kingston
Arts, Recreation & Community Policies Committee
Meeting Number 01-2024
Addendum**

**Wednesday, December 13, 2023 at 6:00 p.m.
Hosted at City Hall in Council Chamber**

8. Business

The consent of the Committee is requested for the withdrawal of Business Item c), Community Garden Policy Update (Report Number ARCP-24-004).

11. Correspondence

- a) Correspondence received from Nick Laan, dated Monday, December 11, 2023, regarding the Community Garden Policy Update Report.

Addendum Pages 1 – 4

From: [Sullivan,Iain](#)
To: [Sullivan,Iain](#)
Subject: FW: Community Garden Policy Update
Date: December 12, 2023 1:49:23 PM
Attachments: [image001.png](#)
[image002.png](#)
[image003.png](#)
[image004.png](#)

From: Jaynes,Janet <jjaynes@cityofkingston.ca>
Sent: Monday, December 11, 2023 9:06 AM
To: Nicholas Laan
Cc: Campbell,Jennifer <jlcampbell@cityofkingston.ca>; Gargaro,Tony <tgargaro@cityofkingston.ca>; O'Connor,Christine <cloconnor@cityofkingston.ca>
Subject: RE: Community Garden Policy Update

Hello,

The City of Kingston acknowledges and thanks you for your communication. Your correspondence has been provided to all Members of the Arts, Recreation & Community Policies Committee and appropriate City staff. Please be advised that your correspondence may form part of the public agendas and minutes, and therefore will be made available to members of the public at the meetings, through requests, and through the website of the Corporation of the City of Kingston. Contact information, such as phone numbers and email addresses, will be redacted from documents shared with the public.



Janet Jaynes (she/her/hers)

City Clerk
Office of the City Clerk

City of Kingston
City Hall,
216 Ontario Street Kingston, ON K7L 2Z3
613-546-4291 extension 1262



jjaynes@cityofkingston.ca

The City of Kingston acknowledges that we are on the traditional homeland of the Anishinaabe, Haudenosaunee and the Huron-Wendat, and thanks these nations for their care and stewardship over this shared land.

From: Nicholas Laan
Sent: Monday, December 11, 2023 8:58 AM
To: Chaves,Paul <pchaves@cityofkingston.ca>; Amos,Don <damos@cityofkingston.ca>; Boehme, Ryan N. <rboehme@cityofkingston.ca>; Osanic,Lisa <losanic@cityofkingston.ca>; Ridge,Gregory <gridge@cityofkingston.ca>; Stephen,Wendy <wstephen@cityofkingston.ca>; City Clerk <CityClerk@cityofkingston.ca>

Subject: Community Garden Policy Update

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Hello members of the ARCP committee,

I am writing in reference to your meeting this Wednesday December 13th and the Community Garden Policy updates (Report Number ARCP-24-004). I am urging you to not pass the policy update at this time and send it back for amendments.

The City staff have done an excellent job running the get involved engagement survey and getting feedback from residents. The in person meeting of community garden coordinators was also very helpful and informative. It has been great to see City Staff who are excited and supportive of community gardens at these meetings. What I am noting from the meeting is that the staff have come up with a good plan to make the process for finding and starting a new garden on city land more streamlined and efficient with well defined timelines. My concern is that many of the other issues brought up in the survey and consultation process have not made very much progress in this policy change. It is very important that we get this right because the current policy is holding back gardens from being the climate fighting, food security hubs that we all want to see them become.

Through my 15 years of experience working with the City through Oak Street Community Garden I have come to understand how important this policy document is. We have run into many situations where staff understand our situation and are supportive of our needs. Many times liability concerns based on what is written in the policy has gotten in the way of progress which would make the city a more food secure and accessible space for all. I have seen many gardens on privately owned land in the city soar ahead to become examples of sustainability that the gardens on City owned land are striving to do but often get blocked by policy.

Here are the sections in the policy that I believe need further revision before approval:

3.4.2.2 site requirements:

i. Above ground raised beds are an important part of any community garden for accessibility reasons and should be included in every site. The current issue is that the policy makes it very challenging to do any growing of food in ground. One major issue is the prohibitive cost associated with building a large number of raised beds for a decent sized garden. The raised

beds also need frequent replacement as they tend to rot away after roughly five years. We need to start putting emphasis on stewarding and improving our local soils. It is the more sustainable solution as it involves less material inputs and encourages people to start healing the local soil and adding carbon sequestration and lowering water use through the use of mulches and compost.

iv. Checking for past land use is a great start in finding spots to establish a new garden. We desperately need to have the City do a soil test in all locations. We have had many promising sites and projects rejected or delayed because there is potential concern over soil quality. In many of these situations a test could easily mitigate concerns or also allow us to make minor changes to a project based on the information available. These tests would also make it easier to wave the requirements of all beds being raised therefore reducing material costs and expense of establishing a new garden.

3.4.4

vii – General Liability Insurance. During the last three years the city has been providing insurance for gardens who have requested. We are very low budget organizations and this cost was a significant budget line for our community. We felt like the current situation had been an improvement but do not see a change reflected in the policy here.

xii – Environmental innovation and demonstration is encouraged. This is great to read in the policy but in practice any innovations we attempt to implement at the garden tend to take years of back and fourth before we are allowed to make changes on the ground. The long delays and waits often lead to disengagement in our volunteer groups.

xiv – Encouraging water conservation in all gardens is an excellent goal and I stand behind any measures to get community gardens to implement water saving practices. Charging for city water on site however is another significant barrier to a low funded group that is trying to improve food access to vulnerable populations. Originally gardens were not charged for water access. Newer gardens who have started up after this policy change have expressed that running for years without water is challenging to start a new garden and environmentally unsustainable, as many people start driving vs walking and cycling to sites in order to bring water with them. When they finally get city water brought in they end up having to increasing their fees to members which makes equal access for some members more challenging.

3.4.6.1

i.v – All trees and shrubs need prior approval before planting. Having helped start Oak Street Food Forest this line is very challenging. Young trees die and need to be replaced and sometimes nurseries have a very narrow window for ordering stock. Also many plants at nurseries go out of stock fast. Communication back and fourth with the city has tended to take

months for simple requests. This whole process makes it near impossible for establishing a food forest or little forest. I think a better approach would be to have an approved idea with a list of backup or similar trees. Allow the group to make decisions on the ground as they arise and report changes in the end of year report to the city. This is the current approach that we had agreed to with city staff and it is important to have in writing as part of the policy moving forward.

3.4.6.2 – liability insurance – see my comments above in section 3.4.4 vii

Finally I encourage you to read all the comments in Exhibit D of ARCP-24-004. I think you will find that many of the community feedback comments support the changes I am requesting in this message.

Thank you for all the work that you do in the city and please continue to work towards making it a sustainable, climate friendly, livable place.

Nick Laan

Oak Street Community Garden and Food Forest