



Office of the Mayor

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April 8, 2013

To: Plan Commission, Board of Parks Commissioners, Common Council

From: Mark Woulf, Food and Alcohol Policy Coordinator

Re: Brittingham Community Garden Lease language

On April 16, the Common Council will consider a lease between the city and Community Action Coalition (CAC) for a community garden at Brittingham Park. As many of you already know, the process for locating a community garden in Brittingham Park has dragged out over many months. Mayor Soglin appreciates the many different stakeholders for their patience and is excited that the Common Council approved the community garden proposal for the park in January. The approval of this lease is the final step before CAC can begin its work in preparing the plot of land for the public. To avoid cutting into the growing season, approval of this lease at the April 16th Common Council meeting is essential.

While Mayor Soglin is encouraging the execution of this lease, he is respectfully asking that *Condition 7* (“Exhibit B”) in the lease resolution be stricken. His opinion is the proposed language in “Exhibit B” goes far beyond what is appropriate for a community garden lease on public land. CAC is entrusted with managing our community garden program, and has done a fabulous job at doing so with limited resources. That said, there is no compelling reason to micromanage to this extent.

“Exhibit B” requires CAC to plant and maintain an “aesthetically-pleasing planted border”. The border would be approximately 424 linear feet including a mulched pathway of four feet in width. Not only would this come at an extreme cost to CAC, it would take away six or seven plots that would otherwise be available to the public. There is also no clear definition of “aesthetically-pleasing,” so it is difficult to imagine how this would be enforced in a practical manner. CAC has committed to making the extra effort at aesthetics for the garden and that assertion is satisfactory.

The second provision within “Exhibit B” calls for “no permanent or temporary fencing.” This provision conflicts with lease resolution *Condition 6c*. This condition requires approval of permanent improvements by the Parks Superintendent beyond facilities for water service, trellises, and raised beds. It is reasonable for CAC to be able to request a permanent fencing structure surrounding the garden to prevent rabbits and small children from running through and damaging plantings, something a planted border would not prevent.

April 8, 2013

Page 2

It is important to note that in the absence of “Exhibit B”, this lease resolution is already site specific, and one of the most restrictive for a community garden. The Mayor understands that there are compelling reasons to have more site specifics at a high-use location such as Brittingham Park. However, the deeper issue with “Exhibit B” is the precedent it sets for the future. His concern is that this type of language both discourages future downtown garden projects and further straps CAC’s already tight resources.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Mark Woulf
Food and Alcohol Policy Coordinator
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