

TO: Madison Food Policy Council

FROM: Community Gardens Committee

DATE: September 27, 2016

**RE: Recommendation to Dissolve the Community Gardens Committee and
Transfer Its Responsibilities to the Food Policy Council**

Since the establishment of the Gardens Network in March of 2015, the issue of duplication of efforts has been at the forefront of our discussions within the Community Gardens Committee. The Gardens Network has assumed most of the responsibilities that were formerly within the purview of the Committee and, with the additional capabilities offered by the City of Madison Food Policy Council, there appear to be no ongoing issues that couldn't be handled by these two entities. Therefore, it is our recommendation that the Community Gardens Committee be dissolved, and its policy oversight responsibilities assumed by the Food Policy Council.

Please discuss this request/recommendation at the October 2016 meeting of the Food Policy Council to enable the Community Gardens Committee to take appropriate follow-up action at its remaining meetings this year.

Background

With the Community Action Coalition's decision in 2014 to terminate its community gardens program, representatives from the City of Madison, Dane County UW Extension, and Community GroundWorks came together to propose a new approach to supporting the creation, maintenance, and expansion of community gardens in Madison and Dane County. Their efforts led to the establishment of the Gardens Network in May of 2015, when an agreement was signed by each of these partners. A Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) attached to the agreement details the roles and responsibilities of each partner, and a governance model outlining a decision-making structure that represents and values the individual interests of each governing partner as well as the interests of community gardens in Dane County and their interested stakeholders. Community GroundWorks serves as the fiscal agent for the partnership. Key activities of the partnership and the role each partner plays are detailed in the Gardens Network Overview document.

Since its formation, the Gardens Network has successfully assumed the majority of responsibilities that were the purview of the Community Gardens Committee since 1999. And with both community and governmental representation on various governing and advisory

committees of the Gardens Network, we see no need for the Community Gardens Committee to play a liaison role to the Gardens Network.

Additionally, city policy regarding food-related issues was firmly established within the purview of the Food Policy Council, which was created in 2012. The Community Gardens Committee believes there are no community gardens-related policy issues that the Food Policy Council could not perform under its mission, in particular if a work group or subcommittee were established to provide specific focus on community gardens.

The Community Gardens Committee has done an exhaustive examination of the issues that led to the creation of the Community Gardens Committee in 1999, which can be found in Legistar #42601 (April 2016). This examination included an identification of resolved issues, as well as an assessment of unresolved issues and an assessment of whether they are within the missions of the Community Gardens Committee, Gardens Network, and/or Food Policy Council. This examination determined that there were no longer any issues that fell solely within the mission of the Community Gardens Committee.

These conclusions were further reinforced by a discussion with community gardens stakeholders on April 26, 2016, which reaffirmed that, between the Gardens Network and the Food Policy Council, there was no compelling reason, or uniqueness of mission, to justify the ongoing existence of the city's Community Gardens Committee.

Unresolved Issues for Further Consideration

In the examination process described above, the Committee identified the following three issues that we believe require special focus, and we ask the Food Policy Council to maintain these as ongoing items of interest, whether through a subcommittee or work group or through whatever vehicle the FPC thinks best:

- Land Availability and Security: Identification of mechanisms for planning and acquiring additional public and private land for gardens, as well as securing tenure for community gardens through the use of long-term lease agreement.
- Programmatic Support: Engagement with a broad base of stakeholders to support the development of strong and inclusive programming, including an emphasis on financial investment in community gardens in need.
- Improved Garden Infrastructure: Identification of gaps in functional infrastructure for community gardens that require cross-department cooperation, including but not limited to providing compost to community gardens.

Thank you for your consideration.