

To Whom It May Concern:

September 30, 2022

I am Jennifer Lord, PhD, and I attended the Parks and Recreation Commission zoom public meeting September 29, 2022.

I wish to add comments for inclusion in the report that goes forward for the Town Council Meeting on October 11, 2022 as it was indicated during that zoom meeting that we could submit comments by email. Thank you.

I commend the San Anselmo Town Council and Parks and Recreation for creating governance including bylaws that will support the gardeners. The creation of a procedural entity for joint oversight, inclusive of the Steering Committee, is a positive way to move forward in a situation that includes some contentious aspects.

It is to be applauded that Parks and Recreation will bear oversight of the gardeners' work at Robson, serving as good stewards of that vital community activity in the town.

It is to be celebrated; it is a point of pride, that there is a garden, indeed a multifaceted communal garden space in the prosperous place that is San Anselmo, Marin County. San Anselmians can be pleased that they, too, boast of a town garden.

- All around the nation, in diverse contexts, there are civic efforts focused on establishing community gardens such as that existing in Robson Garden.
- This community garden exemplifies the best 21<sup>st</sup> century intentions: a recovery of practices that connect persons to the natural world, its seasons, and to one another
- The gardeners at Robson represent an important cross-section of persons including persons from different income levels, persons with documented disabilities, and other diverse self-identifiers that are protected and prized in communities across the nation; the gardens are a location and act of justice
- These gardeners, even in their diversity, are committed to working co-operatively – a unique something that is in addition to the other local communal gatherings for music, food, and outdoor enjoyment
- Robson Gardens is tended in such a way that it continues to draw visitors who celebrate and honor the earth-work done in that space
- The Steering Committee with the Commission will ensure the creation of new plots and best practices for plot designations
- The gardeners sustain a place in town that stands as an active sign of the interdependence; the best minds of our century champion such interdependence for the future of humanity in relation to the earth
- Cities and towns, both nation and world-wide, invest in the simplicity of a community garden for these reasons

These dynamic aspects of the gardeners' work at Robson are exactly what San Anselmians can celebrate and proudly support. The town is not an out-of-touch enclave of the privileged; instead its citizens value and support a place as simple and as significant as this community garden with its bio and human diversity. By supporting the gardeners at Robson, San Anselmians show that they are in rhythm with commitments to justice, care of the earth, and work-in-common.

The Parks and Recreation Commission is to be commended for this innovation in oversight and care for the ongoing work of the gardeners at Robson.

Sincerely,

Jennifer L. Lord  
Former resident, San Anselmo, CA  
Annual seasonal resident, San Anselmo, CA

## Robyn Clifford

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**From:** Dannielle Mauk  
**Sent:** Monday, October 3, 2022 12:40 PM  
**To:** Robyn Clifford  
**Subject:** FW: Friends of Robson: Requested changes and additions to Robson Garden bylaws

**Follow Up Flag:** Follow up  
**Flag Status:** Flagged

Here are the second set of comments for the agenda item on the Community Gardens. I only received two.

*Stay Safe and Healthy!*  
 Dannielle Mauk  
 Director of Community Services  
[www.townofsananselmo.org](http://www.townofsananselmo.org)  
[dmauk@townofsananselmo.org](mailto:dmauk@townofsananselmo.org)

**From:** Jason Stoughton <jasonstoughton1@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Thursday, September 29, 2022 2:09 PM  
**To:** Dave Donery <ddonery@townofsananselmo.org>; Dannielle Mauk <dmauk@townofsananselmo.org>  
**Subject:** Friends of Robson: Requested changes and additions to Robson Garden bylaws

**CAUTION:** External Sender

Hi Dave and Dannielle

The following is a handful of bylaw additions and changes that we request be put into the final document for council to consider. Many people are busy and can't make it tonight so I wanted to email them to you to make sure they are included in the packet to Town Council in October. I for one am going to try and make it but am coaching rec soccer and so will be late if I can make it at all.

I know that some neighbors wrote council prior to the last meeting so hopefully the concerns they raised will be included in your report, but I didn't aggregate those here since they had already written council.

Below are very specific issues that we feel are important to address to make sure that the garden is a good tenant at the public park, and look forward to seeing them in the report to council so that they can debate them. Thanks! Best, Jason

From: Submitted by Friends of Robson  
 Regarding: Community Garden bylaws

The Friends of Robson are requesting the addition of, and changes to, the following bylaws for the garden located at Robson Park:

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- Water usage
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- Plot sizes and waiting lists
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- Aesthetics of the garden in our neighborhood park
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- Forbid the expansion of the garden outside of its current perimeter
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- Maintaining and protecting built infrastructure including historic stone and brick walls
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We believe that if these bylaws are enacted we will have a more aesthetic garden that blends more naturally with its beautiful surroundings, environmentally friendly, water responsible, protects the built infrastructure of the historic park, and which is able to accommodate more gardeners to enjoy the community garden in our neighborhood park.

Thank you for including these requests in the final packet for Town Council to evaluate.

- 1.
- 2.
3. **Reducing Water Usage:**
- 4.

**Problem: Too much water used/not environmentally friendly/Town is subsidizing usage**

It is imperative that in the midst of a historic climate change driven drought that everyone in town, and especially those on public land, do everything possible to reduce water usage to a bare minimum.

Currently many gardeners hand water, and the gardens can easily be described as “over watered”, especially when compared to gardens in neighbors yards in the surrounding neighborhood.

Here are some suggested bylaws to ensure that the garden at Robson reduces its water usage and are good stewards of town land and shared Marin water:

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- **Mandatory drip irrigation:**
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- Mandate drip irrigation as the
- only
- watering method authorized for use in the town garden. Hand watering with a hose should be forbidden.

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- **Mandate water cuts during times of drought:**
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- Include a mechanism in the bylaws that triggers additional water reduction when the county/state
- declares a water emergency. This reduction should mirror cuts the town does elsewhere (i.e. if the town reduces water usage by 60% then the garden should reduce by 60%). This reduction should be monitored quarterly by the Steering Committee and Parks and Rec.
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- Ban plants the require lots of water during drought

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- **Garden should actually pay for the water they use (stop town subsidies):**
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- The garden should pay the full cost of their water usage as an incentive to reduce watering.
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- *Currently the town subsidizes*
- the use of water at the garden by “splitting” the water bill with the garden. The problem is that in times of drought the town reduces watering at Robson, while the garden doesn’t, and yet the bill is still “split” evenly though the garden uses a much higher
- percentage of the water at that point. By paying the full cost of the water they use the garden will have a direct financial incentive to reduce usage.
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  - Note: this would probably mean a structure of garden fee that is a base plot rental fee + water
  - fee based on usage bill
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- **Install a new water meter to track and monitor water usage:**
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- To achieve water reduction, and in order to monitor it, a new meter needs to be installed that is for the garden only.
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- **Remove perverse incentives in the current and proposed bylaws that encourage over watering:**
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- The current proposed bylaws contains a perverse incentive that requires each gardener to fully
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- use their plot at all times, which means gardeners are forced to use more water instead of leaving portions of their plot fallow to conserve water.
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- **The Garden should finally actually achieve its original mandate as an “educational” resource:**
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- Part of the original mandate of the garden was to be “educational” in nature, which has never been
- followed. This could be a great opportunity for the garden group to model and then help educate town residents on how to have a low water use garden - i.e. types of herbs and vegetables that use less water, soil techniques to reduce water use, water reduction methods, etc.
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- The Steering Committee should be required to organize and manage a garden tour and educational
- day at least 2 times per year for the wider San Anselmo community to teach low water usage techniques.
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## **2. Plot sizes and waiting lists:**

**Problem: Too many people on the waiting list/Plots are too large**

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- We should do everything possible to accommodate as many tax paying town residents as possible within
- the current boundaries (perimeter) of the garden.
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- Many of our garden plots are massive and way larger than anything found at other community gardens
- in Marin.
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- A maximum garden plot size should be established and all gardens exceeding that maximum should
- be cut down to accommodate additional gardeners.
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- The maximum should be based on average plot sizes of community gardens in surrounding towns
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- Note: Larkspur accommodates twice as many gardeners in a space smaller than Robson.
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### 3. Plot and garden design:

**Problem: The garden is designed in a haphazard manner and is an eyesore**

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- **All plots should be designed in a conforming manner**
- (like Larkspur, San Rafael, Terra Linda, San Geronimo and Mill Valley)
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- Parks and rec, along with neighbors of the park, should work together to set standards that are
- as minimal in height as possible with conforming materials.
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- Note: We understand that this cannot happen overnight but standards should be set and going forward
- any changes to any plots should conform to these new standards.
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- **Plots should not be individually fenced.**
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- This allows the garden to more easily accommodate new additional gardeners and moves the garden
- closer to the terms agreed to by the Town when it accepted the Park.
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- Note: the Agreement the Town entered into by accepting the property clearly states that the grounds
- 'shall never be divided or subdivided for private or individual use'. Clearly the gardens violate this with individually fenced plots locked for private use.
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- Each large section of the garden should have one fence around it. None of the community gardens
- in Marin allow individually fenced gardens.
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### 4. No increase in the perimeter (footprint) of the garden

**Problem: The garden is already larger than most community gardens in Marin and takes up a tremendous amount of SA public land**

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- The garden should not increase the size of its footprint on public land outside of its current perimeter.
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- Ensure that if there is no waiting list and gardens are vacant that they revert back to the park for the use of all town residents. Historically what has happened is that gardeners simply absorbed empty plots and extended their garden size.
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## **5. Failing historic walls**

**Problem: Many of the historic walls in the garden area are failing. These are expensive to fix. Some believe they are failing because of over watering, too much soil and human usage. Either way they are a liability.**

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- Gardens with walls that are failing should be eliminated as a garden and the gardener moved to another plot
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- Experts should be brought in to determine which of the other historical walls are at risk and those should also be protected by removing the garden damaging it.
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- For example, a plot just opened up that contains a wall that is literally falling over. This should not be a garden plot.
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Thank you for including these in the report to council.



**From:** [wendy.t](#)  
**To:** [Town Council](#)  
**Subject:** Robson Community Garden  
**Date:** Monday, September 26, 2022 8:17:18 AM

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**CAUTION:** External Sender

Hello San Anselmo Town Councilmembers,

I am writing to encourage you to maintain Robson Harrington park as a community garden. I am not a gardener, however I very much benefit from being able to walk and view the gardens every day with my dog! The space is accessible for all residents to enjoy and I can not imagine a better use of that area.

Thank you,  
Wendy Todd  
53 Hillside Ave, San Anselmo

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Wendy Todd, MPH  
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415.596.0607

**From:** [Jason Watkins](#)  
**To:** [Town Council](#)  
**Subject:** Robson Harrington Community Garden  
**Date:** Tuesday, September 27, 2022 9:17:36 AM

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**CAUTION:** External Sender

Hello Town Councilmembers,

I have heard that there is discussion around removing the community gardens at Robson Harrington Park. I wanted to let you know that I walk to the park and through the gardens almost every day with my dog. Although I do not have a plot at the garden, I love walking through the pathways to see all of the vegetables and flowers each gardener grows. And, there have been times when I've been offered vegetables that I took home to cook.

These gardens offer the public an area of peace and tranquillity. I know I am not alone as I always run into people doing the same thing I am doing--walking the grounds to relax and enjoy the beautiful surroundings.

Thank you,

Jason Watkins  
53 Hillside Ave, San Anselmo