

Rico Villa  
280 Redwood Road  
San Anselmo CA 94960

June 24 2022

Michael Cerio, Parks and Recreation

RE: Proposed San Anselmo Community Garden Bylaws

As a long time resident of San Anselmo and a member of the community garden, I feel that there should be a provision made for existing gardeners that are out of town residents. I propose to "grandfather" in existing members and require that new gardeners be San Anselmo residents.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Rico Villa', with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Rico Villa  
[rico777villa@gmail.com](mailto:rico777villa@gmail.com)  
(415) 690-6981

## Dannielle Mauk

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**From:** Jason Stoughton <jasonstoughton1@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, June 22, 2022 2:41 PM  
**To:** Dannielle Mauk  
**Subject:** Two quick comments/suggestions regarding new garden rules

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**CAUTION:** External Sender

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Hi Dannielle,

As a member of the garden I was forwarded a copy of the new proposed rules. Thank you for the hard work you have put into this. I would like to humbly offer two suggestions that maybe you could consider.

1. Build out of gardens: Some gardeners have built really imposing and "permanent" structures in their gardens including fences and solid wood planter beds that fully cover the garden plot. And this practice is becoming more common over the past two years. They are built as if they will never be removed, which one day they might be if the Town decides to use the space for other purposes, sub-divide among multiple people, etc. at which point the Town would have to spend thousands dismantling them. Additionally, if every gardener built these types of structures it would fundamentally change the look and feel of Robson. In addition, some of these structures have been built by outside work crews which would seem to be a liability for the Town. The town of Larkspur has a requirement for its community garden that anything built in one's plot has to be "easily removed" by the gardener when they leave. In other words, tread lightly on the land.

2. Meeting attendance: There is a requirement that every gardener attend at least one of the two meetings per year. In the past the requirement has been "in person", despite requests to add a Zoom component. It is hard to do for those who work, parent, coach, volunteer, etc. and I am hoping that with the new rules we can add a Zoom option.

Thanks!

Jason Stoughton

*Michael Cerio, Cat Austin Alexander*

*Concerning the proposal to kick those of us who do not reside in San Anselmo out of Robson Community garden:*

*More than a third of us would be removed from our plots that we have worked so hard on, spent so much money on, and contributed to the communal space outside of our own plots. We are emotionally connected to the garden as well.*

*Other community gardens throughout the state have grandfathered in their existing "outsiders" and let them drop out through attrition. This seems the only fair plan. We have spent so much time, effort and money building our soil, weeding the communal areas to make the garden enjoyable for the many people who wander through.*

*The city might be surprised when they have to pay the money, do the planning, do the upkeep, etc. if they take over what we have successfully managed in a friendly, gentle manner between our own diligent members for the last however long the garden has been a community garden.*

*I think you are making a grave mistake.*

*Martha Shaw  
231 Frustuck Ave  
Fairfax CA. 94930*

**Dannielle Mauk**

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**From:** Karen Petterson <kepetterson@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Sunday, July 10, 2022 12:19 PM  
**To:** Dannielle Mauk  
**Subject:** SACG personal feedback from the meeting

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**CAUTION:** External Sender

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Danielle,

I have yet to speak up except as a secretary to the community garden, but after the Saturday meeting I feel I must give my perspective as one of those "new gardeners that doesn't stick around" that the more senior gardeners were referring to. I am in my 4th summer in the garden. The most senior gardeners are definitely the old guard and many of them - as you heard and saw - are non-residents. They are very resistant to new ideas, and new ways of organizing. It has not been easy to be an involved new member. As long as I comply with their system and don't make waves, I am accepted. I believe new gardeners are not going to be a big problem, in fact they will be an asset and more fully ready to be a part of something new than the old guard is. This CG could definitely be organized in a manner that more closely works with the community and I applaud the Parks and Rec department involvement.

I believe the commission's recommendation for the CG to be a residents only project is the correct recommendation. Giving them another year is a generous compromise; most have already been here 10-20 years. With as many community gardens as there are in Marin, they can join the one in their own town and will grow to love it too!

When I talk with my San Anselmo neighbors about the garden and they find out there are non-residents in plots it is practically a conversation stopper, they are united in their voice that non-residents should not be in the CG while residents sit on the waitlist.

Sincerely,  
Karen Petterson  
417 Laurel Ave  
330-256-1075

**Dannielle Mauk**

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**From:** Barb and Roger Jobin <dixonjobin@mac.com>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, July 13, 2022 7:18 AM  
**To:** Dannielle Mauk  
**Subject:** Garden Plots at Robson Park

CAUTION: External Sender

Dear Danielle:

I am a member of the Friends of Robson Committee and my husband and I own the property adjacent to the Park so we are highly invested in the Park both literally and figuratively. We have been concerned about the oversight of the gardeners plots so we are happy to learn that they will now be under the guidance of the Park and Rec Dept.

Occasionally something has shown up in a plot that causes us to say " they approved that?" until we learned there was no approval process or oversight for what each Gardener chose to do with their plots. And those occurrences are also somewhat counter productive to the efforts of FOR to beautify the Park. We are recommending that guidelines be established as to what each gardener is allowed to put in their plot. In a perfect world, these guidelines will be a consensus by both groups (gardeners and Park and Rec). Any variance beyond those guidelines should go before a design review process (as we had to do when we built our house). We hope the theme of those guidelines is "what meets the needs of the gardeners AND doesn't detract from the beauty of the park but in fact enhances it." Consistency of design elements is perhaps a good start.

It is in the interest of the gardeners and all of the people who enjoy the Park to be vigilant to its maintenance and preservation. We hope your guidelines adhere to the mission of its use and the commitment the Town made to the Robson Harrington Families when they accepted stewardship of the Park.

Please let us know how we might be better stewards too.  
Thank you for your consideration,  
Barb and Roger Jobin  
101 Magnolia Ave.

Sent from my iPad

Gay Kagy  
280 Redwood Road  
San Anselmo, CA 94960

July 11, 2022

Cat Austin-Alexander, Vice Chairman  
Parks and Recreation Commission


Re: Proposed Bylaws

The threat of evicting 13 members of the San Anselmo Community Garden has already provoked alarm and concern. If Parks and Recreation wishes to establish a congenial working relationship with the gardeners dropping the harmful retroactive residency requirement would be a good beginning.

Such a move would honor those experienced and dedicated seniors for their extended contributions to the benefit of the park. Some have spent most of their adult life (40 years) tending their plots, forming friendships, and advising visitors about gardening.

There are extensive areas within Robson Park that could be made available for garden plots. This would accommodate people waiting for openings and solve the issue of common areas maintenance.

Sincerely,

  
Gay Kagy

(415) 457-2168

Dear *Michael Cerio,*

I am writing to address the new proposed by-laws suggestion that non-residents of San Anselmo be evicted from Robson-Harrington garden. I feel that this discriminates against two disadvantaged groups: low income renters, who cannot afford to buy a home in Marin County, and the elderly.

If you are a renter and wish to garden, you face a barrage of problems. The flat, sunny land needed to grow vegetables and flowers is at a premium in Marin, and the vast majority of rentals don't have it. If it exists, expensive infrastructure comes first, for the ever present deer and gophers; then irrigation and soil enhancement. This comes out of the renter's pocket, as landlords are not obligated to provide these luxuries, and if the renter has to move in a few years, well, too bad. Additionally, and this is a continued point throughout my letter, gardens take time, years, and commitment.

The proposed eviction affects 13 people, gardening in 10 of the 33 plots. All but 3 of these are retired, in their 70's and 80's. Most lived in San Anselmo when they joined the garden-some 10, 15, 30, 40 years ago. The steps, and distance from parking, are special problems, which most of us will not be able to keep up with indefinitely. On the other hand, the physical challenge of the terrain provides healthy exercise. There is a chance to grow food and flowers, and for many, a primary source of social interaction.

Many of us have served on the board for several years, and all have been conscientious with the upkeep of our own plots and general care of the park.

I am one of the 13. I am 73 years old, and my life has always been about plants. I had a landscaping company, a degree in horticulture, and worked at Sunnyside Nursery in San Anselmo as the bedding and vegetable buyer, tender, educator, for 27 years. I joined the Robson Harrington Garden about 12 years ago. Time moves on; the nursery closed, I retired, I had to move, and could not find another rental in San Anselmo; I now live nearby.

Over the years I have put thousands of dollars and countless hours enhancing and maintaining my plot here at Robson-Harrington. It's an easy one to find, just below the house, with the beautiful roses and perennials-about half flowers and half vegetables. I am diligent about its care, as it is a source of pride, and if feedback from people strolling by is to be believed, a source of pleasure for the community. I served 7 years on the garden board as "plot coordinator"-keeping the list of people who wished to join, gently encouraging those who were no longer actively participating to leave, and welcoming new members in the garden, until last year, when I stepped down.

I suggest that we non-residents be "grandpersoned" in, as opposed to being forced to vacate. The existing agreement, if I'm getting it straight, implies non residents were allowed if there weren't San Anselmo residents waiting. For the future list, I'd suggest residency at time of application, with leniency towards those who have been forced to relocate to another neighborhood....giving renters the same opportunity to garden as homeowners.

*Luanna Helfman*

Thank you,  
Luanna Helfman

415 320 9213

Dear Council Member,

**We are at a rare inflection point with Robson Harrington Park.**

As a town, we are exploring how to comply with increased demands on housing, potentially adding another 800 housing units to our local neighborhoods and further shrinking already modest sized yards.

Public parks, necessary for physical and emotional well being, and their accessibility to residents of all ages, are critical as we plan for that future. This is all occurring at the same time as you are working with 0.16% of our residents on guidelines for their own personal share of a fourth of Robson Harrington Park.

So, perhaps this is a good time to take a step back and ask some serious questions. "Is this what was originally intended for this park?" Is the park accessible and safe for residents of all ages? How is the park positioned to meet the needs of our town as we grow?"

I've attached a copy of The Robson's Agreement with the Town of San Anselmo below, recorded July 8, 1968. It's quite lengthy so I've pulled two sections that I feel are most applicable to the decisions being considered.

**Page 3 Section 4:**

*"CITY (San Anselmo) further agrees that the said real property above described shall never be sold in whole or in part, or subdivided, or used for private or commercial purposes"*

**Page 10 Section 2:**

*The following uses with respect to the future operation of the park were authorized and included, A. Parking (still in place today) "B. The construction and maintenance of a children's playground with any and all of the usual equipment and apparatus including a modest wading pool. C. Conducting a teen-age program of an educational nature, including arts and crafts, and the installation and maintenance of all necessary books, tools, equipment and machinery with respect to such use. D. Conducting a program for "senior citizens of an educational and recreational nature..."*

In Robson Harrington Park today, 33 gardeners, 13 of whom are non-residents, have fenced in and padlocked nearly 25% of the total 2.68 acre lot. This is an area larger than Creek Park. All the while, off leash dogs, failing walls and condemned structures render



anything below the upper yard unwise for free play especially for the very young or the very old.

Despite the need, we can all agree that a full scale redesign is not feasible at this time. However, I believe that if we take some time to outline goals for the park and keep these goals in mind as opportunities such as these present themselves we'll eventually get there.

Larkspur, a comparable town in size and residency has a robust community garden from which we might be able to draw inspiration. Below is a comparison of the two:

**San Anselmo/Robson Harrington Park Community Garden Key Facts:**

- San Anselmo's population: **12,623 over 2.68 mi<sup>2</sup>**
- **33 gardeners** (20 San Anselmo residents/13 non-residents)
- **278 sq. ft. per gardener**
- All are individual gardens for personal use only

**Larkspur/Piper Park (Larkspur) Community Garden Key Facts:**

- Larkspur's population: **12,363 over 3.24 mi<sup>2</sup>**
- **78 gardeners** (Larkspur/Greenbrae only)
- **93 sq. ft. per gardener**
- The entire garden is fenced but gardeners and volunteers are allowed access to all of the gardens, compost, tool shed and communal orchard
- Volunteers tend to the communal orchard by pruning, weeding, mulching and spraying as necessary
- Committees see to the general upkeep of the garden including path maintenance and irrigation lines. This includes leak detection and replacement of leaky hose stands as well as referrals of broken wooden hose posts and borders to public works for repair
- Specialized committees like the Rose Committee, complete the winter pruning in common areas and offer professional guidance to those with plots on correct pruning methods. Pruning of individual garden roses is available for a small fee
- Projects necessary for the overall improvement of the garden, but not taken care of by a committee, are divided into tasks and completed by gardeners on Garden Work Days with the help of volunteers
- More information about the Larkspur community garden and images can be found [here](#)

Given this data, here are my suggestions for a path forward at Robson Park.

Phase I

1. Reduce/Standardize the size of the individual gardens to 100 sq. ft. Residents on the waiting list (45) would be motivated help with this as it gives them an opportunity to “get in”
2. At this point, to the extent possible, standardize the look of the new planting beds in order to improve aesthetics
3. Create a common garden area, perhaps the area with the fig trees. This area is not currently part of the garden but the fig trees are well established and with some tending would flourish. This would show a commitment to the garden as you are adding to it with an existing orchard, not just taking it away.
4. Adjust the guidelines to San Anselmo residents only allowing current non resident gardeners to “partner” with a local gardener off our wait list if they wish to continue
5. Contact Marin Office of Education about having this fall’s **Regional Occupation Program Construction Group** build a tool shed for gardeners at Robson

*If you are unfamiliar with this program, it partners many Tam District students with seasoned Marin builders to learn about building through hands-on construction. One of the sheds behind Redwood HS was built by my son’s Drake team in 2017. (still standing, fingers crossed:) More information, as well as contacts, can be found [here](#)*

Phase II

1. Replace individual fences with one common fence and one lock system
2. Communal Orchard (Fig Tree area) to be fenced as well. This creates on large shared garden
3. Invite community to help in garden work days
4. Set up two days a year when the garden is open to visitors. Gardeners could sell/swap seed offer advice etc.

*I have some ideas on who to partner with for materials and a fundraiser to help with costs so this is all possible and could be implemented quickly.*

Making these changes would immediately return several thousand square feet back to the park, increase access to additional residents and foster community through a shared garden space.

Thank you for your consideration,  
Elizabeth Grasso

**Dannielle Mauk**

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**From:** markwblackburn@aol.com  
**Sent:** Saturday, July 16, 2022 4:08 PM  
**To:** Dannielle Mauk  
**Subject:** Fwd: community garden

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

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**CAUTION:** External Sender

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Dannielle Mauk

Director of Community Services

San Anselmo

Dear Dannielle Mauk,

We are writing about the proposal to evict members of the San Anselmo Community Garden who are not residents of San Anselmo.

We support everything that you have heard from Margaret O'Meara, whose letter to you we have read.

Like her, my wife and I are among the gardeners who work one-third of the garden's plots and do not live in San Anselmo.

When we joined the garden more than fifteen years ago, membership was limited to residents of Marin County. In practice, only

residents of San Anselmo or adjoining towns wished to have a plot in the garden. There were no gardeners who lived in, say, Mill

## Valley or Sausalito or Novato.

Even so, we waited five years for our names to rise to the top of the waiting list.

Rather than evict us from the plot we have worked on for so many years, we think it is worth considering the creation of new plots on the substantial amount of unused land that adjoins the existing garden. Quite a few plots could be created that way, perhaps as many

as the 13 in question now, without causing loss to anyone.

We invite you to consider this as an option.

Sincerely,

Mark Blackburn & Larken Bradley

San Rafael

July 16, 2022

**Dannielle Mauk**

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**From:** Barb and Roger Jobin <dixonjobin@mac.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, July 18, 2022 7:36 AM  
**To:** Dannielle Mauk  
**Subject:** Re: Garden Plots at Robson Park

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

CAUTION: External Sender

Hi Danielle,

Thank you for your response. While the review requirements cover all structures higher than 3' we are also hoping the garden plot rules will cover all fencing and garden bed installations too. There are many people who have said they would like to see the fencing surrounding the garden plots standardized and made of a material that is more aesthetically pleasing than the random styles and materials currently in use.

If your meeting was on the 16th....I missed it. When I googled the Park and Rec meeting dates it looked like the zoom meeting will be on the 19th at 7pm?

Was the 16th a special meeting regarding Robson Garden Plots?

Thank you for any clarification you can offer, Barb

Sent from my iPad

> On Jul 13, 2022, at 11:37 AM, Dannielle Mauk <dmauk@townofsananselmo.org> wrote:

>  
 > Hi Barb and Roger:  
 >  
 > Thank you for your comments. We have put a provision in the proposed by laws for inspection of any structure taller than 3ft moving forward. The by-laws will be reviewed by the Parks and Recreation Commission on August 16th and then we will schedule a date for adoption by the Town Council.

>  
 > Stay Safe and Healthy!  
 > Dannielle Mauk  
 > Director of Community Services  
 > www.townofsananselmo.org  
 > dmauk@townofsananselmo.org

>  
 > -----Original Message-----  
 > From: Barb and Roger Jobin <dixonjobin@mac.com>  
 > Sent: Wednesday, July 13, 2022 7:18 AM  
 > To: Dannielle Mauk <dmauk@townofsananselmo.org>  
 > Subject: Garden Plots at Robson Park

>  
 > CAUTION: External Sender  
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Item 4-Attachment 3

>  
> Dear Danielle:  
>  
> I am a member of the Friends of Robson Committee and my husband and I own the property adjacent to the Park so we are highly invested in the Park both literally and figuratively. We have been concerned about the oversight of the gardeners plots so we are happy to learn that they will now be under the guidance of the Park and Rec Dept.  
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> Please let us know how we might be better stewards too.  
> Thank you for your consideration,  
> Barb and Roger Jobin  
> 101 Magnolia Ave.  
>  
> Sent from my iPad

**Dannielle Mauk**

**From:** Dannielle Mauk  
**Sent:** Tuesday, August 16, 2022 3:16 PM  
**To:** Dannielle Mauk  
**Subject:** FW: letter San Anselmo Community Garden - Proposed Bylaw Change re: non SA residents

**From:** Margaret O'Meara <omeara.margaretn@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, August 16, 2022 3:11 PM  
**To:** Dannielle Mauk <dmauk@townofsananselmo.org>; Rod Kerr <hsk100@live.com>; cataloo@gmail.com  
**Subject:** Fwd: letter San Anselmo Community Garden - Proposed Bylaw Change re: non SA residents

**CAUTION:** External Sender

SUBJECT: San Anselmo Community Garden - Proposed Bylaw Change re: non SA residents

I am writing with concern and dismay about your proposal to require existing non-San Anselmo resident members of the San Anselmo Community Garden (SACG) at Robson Harrington Park to relinquish their plots in January 2024.

The recent July 9 meeting of SACG and representatives from Parks and Recreation generated a significant turnout of the garden community to respectfully raise concerns about this proposed change (and support the retention of existing members). Your proposal would call for evicting one third of the garden membership--active, dedicated gardeners (mostly seniors) who were legitimately admitted for membership and who have worked countless hours maintaining and beautifying this beloved public space. This proposal is deeply painful to this group of volunteers.

I would hope that the Town would understand that gardening (i.e. clearing, soil amending, preparing healthy garden beds) is a long-term and significant effort. The beauty and charm of Robson Park is not an accident. It is a product of the generous time, labor, (often significant) personal expense, care, and love from these gardeners.

If the reasoning is to expand opportunities for more people to garden here, there are other ways to achieve this--including making new plots in some of the open areas along paths, especially on the eastern side of the park. If the argument is about turnover: this is an older population, with many folks in their 70s and 80s. To state the obvious, there will be a natural attrition over time.

If this is about cutting the waitlist, as with any community garden, there has always and will always have to be a waitlist. The waitlist number, in fact, can be misleading as an indicator of the number of people who can make the actual commitment. People sign up, thinking it could be fun to have a garden plot. They don't know what they're actually taking on or how much time is involved. They move, or change their minds--or get here and just don't garden.

Expanding opportunities for more community participation is a worthy goal and welcomed. It, however, should not need to cause unnecessary heartache and pain.

I respectfully ask the town to consider the following as an alternative to the proposed “eviction”:

- From this point on, exclusively open the waitlist to only San Anselmo residents (and be sure to notify the non-San Anselmo residents currently on the waitlist about this change.)
- "Grandfather in" the existing SACG members who have non-San Anselmo addresses.
- Open up a few new plots along paths in non-maintained common areas.
- Clearly communicate realistic expectations to people on the waitlist, and ask them to help on community workdays.

There is more to say, but I will respect your time. Thank you for your attention.

Sincerely,

Margaret O'Meara  
[omeara.margaretn@gmail.com](mailto:omeara.margaretn@gmail.com)

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Margaret O'Meara  
[omeara.margaretn@gmail.com](mailto:omeara.margaretn@gmail.com)