

BURNABY AND REGION ALLOTMENT GARDENS ASSOCIATION SUMMARY OF ACTIVITIES, 1982-1986

Attachment to Request for License Renewal, 86.08.30)

The Association was incorporated as a society under the B.C. Society Act in 1982. Its purposes are as follows:

1. To provide opportunities for non-profit recreational fruit and vegetable gardening for residents of an urban area,
2. To provide horticultural advice and shared experience for the members and to encourage those who wish to undertake such gardening for the first time,
3. To perpetuate, in an increasingly technological age, an awareness of the natural, processes of food growing.

During its almost five years of existence, the Association has achieved these purposes and has done so in a fiscally responsible and socially responsive manner. Its activities may be summarized under three headings: (1) Administration and Financial Management, (2) Garden Operation and Site Maintenance, (3) Measures of Success.

Administration and Financial Management

At its annual meeting, held in November or December each year, the Association elects a president, vice-president, secretary, treasurer and three or four directors at large. The Directors have met monthly during the life of the Association. Each Director has specific responsibilities and the Directors have also been able to call on the services of volunteer members for specific tasks as the need arises.

The Association's bylaws provide the ground rules whereby members lease and operate the garden plots at the site. In order to ensure consistent and fair application of the bylaws and to provide consistency of administration from year to year, the Directors have established a number of policies. These policies are reviewed annually and have proved very useful in guiding operational decisions for each year's Directors. The Association has been complimented on this aspect of its operation by the official of the Ministry of Agriculture and Food who was formerly responsible for the allotment garden program at the site.

The Association's first year of operation (1982) was assisted financially by an administration grant from the Minister of Agriculture and Food when he relinquished the allotment garden programme. The Association has also secured summer youth employment (or equivalent) grants for four of its five gardening seasons. These grants, together with the generous terms of the license awarded by the Municipality of Burnaby, have been important in enabling the Association to operate with an annual fee structure which makes it feasible for senior citizens and others with limited incomes to enjoy

membership. These fees are of two kinds, a membership fee and a plot rental fee. These were established in 1982 at \$5 and \$30 respectively. We have been obliged to raise the fees only once (in 1985) and they now stand at \$5 and \$40 respectively.

Operating revenue is derived almost entirely from these fees and amounts to between \$11,000 and \$13,000 annually. Although the financial year begins on January 1st, collection of the majority of fees is not complete until April or May and for this reason the Directors attempt to budget so as to ensure the availability of a cash carry-over of 10 - 15% of revenues at the fiscal year end. Apart from this contingency allocation, expenditures fall into four categories: (a) administration, (b) wages & benefits, (c) equipment & supplies and (d) site operation. On aggregated figures, administration (including the production and distribution of a periodic newsletter to members) have accounted for some 23% of expenditures and site operation for approximately 25%. Wages & benefits and equipment & supplies have together accounted for 52% of expenditures, but have varied inversely with each other depending on the availability of youth employment grants -- when a substantial grant has been received, money which would otherwise have been used for hiring student help has been diverted to the purchase of equipment and vice versa.

Garden Operation and Site Maintenance

The 14.2 acre site is divided into 370 plots (of approximately 1,000 square feet each), a parking lot and two park areas. Picnic tables have been provided in the park areas and two sheds have been installed adjacent to the parking lot. The first of these is large enough to house the Association's equipment and to provide working space and a site "office". The second, an aluminum structure, provides secure fuel storage.

The number of members has ranged from a low of 289 to a high of 327. These members have come from Burnaby and from no fewer than fourteen other municipalities in the region. The latest membership list, (1985) shows that Burnaby residents accounted for 40% of all members. This is a slightly higher proportion than from any other single municipality.

Full plot occupancy has not yet been achieved. A prime reason for this is that a number of plots are low-lying and stay in a wet condition until fairly late in the season. If such plots are cultivated, however, their condition improves and the Association has had some success in reducing the number of these unworkable plots. This has been done partly by encouraging some localized drainage experiments and partly by making such plots available for a one-year term to members who wish to work a second plot. This policy has given the opportunity for keener gardeners to indulge their enthusiasm and, in addition to reducing the number of substandard plots, it has helped to ensure that the appearance of the site is not spoiled by untended plots and the proliferation of self-seeded weeds.

The maintenance of the site's neat and flourishing appearance is partly achieved by the use of member volunteers (as inspection committees, for

example) and partly by the observance of bylaws. Chiefly, however, it is achieved by the use of student help during the May to September peak gardening season. The Association has been generally fortunate in the quality of the student help it has been able to obtain and, by employing students from horticulture related programs, we have been able not only to ensure good quality site maintenance, but also the creation of an instructive demonstration plot and the provision of horticultural advice to members who request it. The acquisition over four years of a rototiller, several mowers and a variety of other hand and power tools has enabled the Association to become more and more efficient in keeping the site trim. In the past twelve months, major upgrading of the main entrance and the parking area, together with the cutting back of overgrown bush; have greatly improved the public appearance of the garden site from its Meadow Avenue entrance.

Measures of Success

Effective administration and responsible financial management over the life of the Association have permitted the continuation of an operation which seemed doomed to closure in 1981 when the Ministry of Agriculture and Food terminated its provincial allotment garden programme. That very continuation is perhaps the most important measure of the Association's success. It is a measure which is difficult to express in quantified terms, but it is important to recognize that the Association is providing a service which is not available by other means and which, besides catering for one particular type of enthusiast, is of particular value to retired people and those on limited incomes. The Burnaby allotment garden site is one of the largest of its kind (indeed, some claim it is the largest) in Canada (and perhaps in North America). While our service is local, the recognition of it has gone beyond the immediate locality during the life of the Association. We have been asked for advice by other groups (in Vancouver and Coquitlam) interested in establishing allotment gardens and for the past three years we have mounted an invited display at the Pacific National Exhibition. In 1983 we were interviewed for the CBC Radio early morning show and in 1985 the gardens were featured in a complete programme of the CBC's "Western Gardener" series. Interest in the Association's operation also apparently extends beyond Canada. In 1982 we were visited by the U.S. National Council for Therapy and Rehabilitation through Horticulture who made a presentation to recognize our work. In 1984 we were visited by a Director of the Public Works Department of the Osaka Prefectural Government in Japan who was interested in using our experience to establish a similar operation in his home city.

The Association considers its first five gardening seasons to have been successful. It is ready and anxious to build on that success, but in order to do so it will need the continuing goodwill of the Municipality of Burnaby in making the garden site available for a five year period under the same favourable terms as have been permitted since 1982.