

Vang, Mai (CI-StPaul)

From: Peterson, Janis (CI-StPaul)
Sent: Monday, October 5, 2020 9:57 AM
To: Vang, Mai (CI-StPaul)
Subject: FW: 150 Fairview Ave. N. - Legislative Hearing Date
Attachments: Additional Testimony Harmony Neal.pdf

Harmony just sent this to me. I attached it to the Legislative Hearing file in Legistar. Is that ok? I'll put it in the I Drive also.
Janis

From: harmony <happyepsilon@gmail.com>
Sent: Monday, October 5, 2020 9:01 AM
To: Peterson, Janis (CI-StPaul) <janis.peterson@ci.stpaul.mn.us>
Subject: Re: 150 Fairview Ave. N. - Legislative Hearing Date

Think Before You Click: This email originated outside our organization.

Dear Janis,

Thank you so much for your help. I've attached additional community testimony in favor of the Giving Gardens.

Is there a way for me to find out how the complaints came to be? Particularly how it is that after Inspector Warner approved the gardens, Inspector Kedrowski came to be involved? It seems unlikely he happened upon the gardens, otherwise he surely would have cited other boulevard gardens that aren't in compliance that are visible from my gardens. So I'd really like to know if this is a concerted effort by one person who hates the Giving Gardens or me personally.

Sincerely,
Harmony Neal

On Fri, Sep 25, 2020 at 9:00 AM Peterson, Janis (CI-StPaul) <janis.peterson@ci.stpaul.mn.us> wrote:

Attached is your Legislative Hearing file. We have scheduled you for **Tuesday, Oct. 6, 2020 at 11:00 a.m.** Hearings are conducted by phone so please be available by phone between 11:00 and 12:30 p.m. Our office will call you for the hearing. Let me know if you have any questions.

Janis

ADDITIONAL TESTIMONY FOR HARMONY NEAL'S GIVING GARDENS

22 pages of letters of support (29 letters total)

7 pages of in person signed petitions

1 page of online signed petition

1 page of transcriptions of comments from Say Anything notebook that didn't copy well

1 page of Giving Gardens Quick Facts

GIVING GARDENS LETTERS OF SUPPORT FROM NEIGHBORS

maryann <maryann@corbettdigital.net> Fri, Sep 25, 2:09 PM (17 hours ago)

to me

Dear Harmony:

I'm writing in support of Giving Gardens, which I pass and admire whenever I walk from my house on Iglehart to the businesses on Grand Avenue. I object to the treatment you are receiving from the city, and I believe the height limits your Facebook post describes--18 or 36 inches depending on location--are arbitrary, needless, and not supported by contemporary environment science. If there's a claim that taller plants obstruct the view of drivers, I'd like to see the proof.

You may include my name on any list of your supporters before the city council.

All best,

Maryann Corbett

1800 Iglehart Avenue, Saint Paul, MN 55104-5214

Elizabeth Gust
<elizabeth@theoddcoupleteam.com>

Fri, Sep 25, 2:19 PM (17 hours ago)

to me

To Whom it May Concern

Harmony Neal's garden is a wonderful addition to the neighborhood and supports those who are struggling with hunger. Please remove the request to end the garden and drop charges against this wonderful Saint Paul citizen.

Sincerely, Elizabeth Gust
1854 Portland Ave. St Paul

Kimberly Switlick Prose Fri, Sep 25, 9:49 PM (9 hours ago)

to me

I'm very supportive of the giving gardens. Thank you for contributing to our community in such a positive way.

Kimberly switlick-Prose
1765 Hague Ave.

Megan Wannarka <m.wannarka@gmail.com> Fri, Sep 25, 7:28 PM (12 hours ago)

to me

To It May Concern,

I am in full support of Giving Gardens and Harmony Neal on the corner of Fairview and Hague. As a near neighbor on Fairview Ave, living in an Apartment building seeing more green spaces used as gardens is a highlight of my day. With COVID going on, along with the food insecurity of many AND the loss of income in many households, edible gardens such as Giving Gardens allows not only food for pollinators but for those vulnerable in our communities without having to ask for a handout.

Boulevards create a perfect space to create pollinator-friendly and edible gardens. Lawns in America make up the largest irrigated landscape and typically feeds no one. I believe the way the world is going we should only have gardens and not lawns of turfgrass.

The out-dated height limitation on boulevard growth is for safety and sight lights for driving and turning. This garden, along with many others is not dense enough to limit the line of sight while turning the corner onto Fairview Ave.

Thank you for your time and consideration,

All the Best Harmony!!

Megan Wannarka
Beekeeping Researcher
cell/whatsapp: 612-963-9368
m.wannarka@gmail.com

Check out my newest honey bee plants international project [Bee.otany®](#)
on Instagram: [@bee.otany](#) twitter: [@bee_otany](#) and Facebook: [bee.otany](#)

Linda K <lindajkelsey@gmail.com> 8:54 AM (5 minutes ago)

to me

Hello Harmony,

I am very sad to learn that the city is having an issue with the Giving Garden. What you have created on the corner of Hague and Fairview is not only a generous and thoughtful gesture at a time when so many are experiencing food insecurity, but it is a learning experience for many families. They can show their kids how vegetables grow and remind them of the ways that we can be give to one another.

I, myself, have contributed throughout the summer as I found myself with an overabundance of squash. I would check on the pantry from time to time, just to see if people were taking them, and saw that they were appreciated and used. Made me feel great that I could help someone who might not be able to find, or afford fresh produce.

I hope that whatever the city needs to see resolved can be settled quickly, without any sort of financial imposition on you. As your neighbor, I support you wholeheartedly, and hope to see the Giving Garden flourish on your corner for many years to come.

Sincerely,

Linda Kelsey
1750 Portland Avenue
St. Paul 55104

Taylor Haney <tayhaney88@gmail.com> 9:40 AM (0 minutes ago)

to me

Harmony,

What you have done is amazing and it is a SHAME that the city ordinances in place (height requirements) are telling you no to a harmless and bountiful Giving Garden! You said it perfectly in your post, these giving gardens are to support the community in which they are grown and taken care of. The community benefits with free vegetables, fruits, and other foods in the Take Food/Leave Food Cabinet, and also the pollinators can do their magical work with the pollinator plants:) I support you 100% and I hope the City will critically think about their outdated ordinances to best match Giving Gardens around St Paul.

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Thank you,

Taylor Haney
Hamline University
(608) 792-0557
Tayhaney88@gmail.com

Sally Wingert 12:12 PM (3 hours ago)

to me

To Whom it May Concern,

I am a Saint Paul homeowner. I have lived at 1769 Hague Ave in Merriam Park for 33 years. The Giving Gardens on the corners of Hague and Fairview have been a beautiful and beneficial addition to our block this spring, summer and fall. I am baffled by the city's desire to dismantle it.

The gardens are well maintained and provide both beauty and nourishment to our community. Food insecurity is real. Harmony's garden provides fresh nutritious vegetables and herbs to anyone who chooses. The garden also has flowers and native plants that help our pollinators. Neighbors who have food to share bring it to Giving Gardens and it's added to the bounty that is offered.

I have been wracking my mind to try to understand what the issue is for the city. The garden offers no visual barrier for right turns onto Fairview nor left turns from Fairview onto Hague. The sidewalk isn't blocked in any direction. Hand sanitizer is available. I have counted 7 other boulevard plantings on my block of Hague alone with plants over 18 inches tall, including my own. I have not been cited or ticketed by the city.

It is my hope that Harmony and the gardens remain here, in our neighborhood, offering comfort and beauty and nourishment. Please feel free to contact me if further information is needed.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sally Wingert
salwingert@gmail.com

Millicent Dosh
1686 Hague Avenue
St Paul, MN
September 28, 2020
tmdosh@gmail.com
612-827-1818

To Whom it may concern:

I am writing to tell you about my experience in the Merriam Park area, and specifically about the Giving Gardens on Hague and Fairview, planted and shared by Harmony Neal.

I was delighted to discover the Gardens on one of my twice-daily walks through the neighborhood in June, 2020.

I moved to St Paul from an incredibly engaged and friendly block in South Minneapolis. When I had a need, 5 young guys would show up as a team to help me out.

My son teaches at Macalester College, and I wanted to live near him as I age, so I moved here July 1, 2019.

It has been very difficult to establish any connections. People smile, but little else. What a change from what I had grown accustomed to in Minneapolis.

Then, I came across the Giving Gardens and began clipping small amounts of herbs to add to my soups. Soon I was able to meet and thank Harmony Neal in person.

People are feeling incredibly isolated, and folks like Harmony are helping us find a tiny taste of love and generosity amidst all the caution.

I am stunned to learn that her sweet, generous and earth-friendly kindness might be in jeopardy.

I truly hope you might correct any small infringements you find in her practices, and offer her compliments and encouragement in her efforts at community building. I hope you might turn your focus to other more dangerous things like cars speeding down Hague at some frequency at 40 MPH and others never bothering to stop at STOP SIGNS.

These are the real concerns we have in this neighborhood.

Thank you for your consideration of my reflections.

Millie Dosh

Lyda Morehouse
<lyda.morehouse@gmail.com>

Tue, Sep 29, 3:11 PM (15 hours ago)

to me

Dear Saint Paul City Council,

My name is Lyda Morehouse and I live in the Meriam Park Neighborhood at 445 Wheeler Street North.

I drive by the Giving Garden nearly every day as part of my regular commute. Every time I see it, it makes me smile. I've stopped by in order to donate food and to just watch the flowers and vegetable garden grow. The Star Tribune named Giving Gardens one of their special gardens in 2020... and we all need something special in 2020.

I understand that some of the contention is over the height of the plants in the boulevard garden. Having stopped by to drop off canned goods this year, I do not believe that the plantings obstruct line of sight as you enter Fairview. The fire hydrant also seems accessible and plainly visible.

I'm shocked to hear that criminal charges are being considered in this matter. That's beyond unreasonable. We all need beauty and food. This is a lovely use of a 'victory garden' for the pandemic. Please allow it to stay. Harmony and her garden are a vital part of our community, providing a great service not only in terms of an actual food pantry/little free pantry, but also in terms of beauty.

We need bread, yes, but roses, too.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,
Lyda Morehouse

445 Wheeler Street North
Saint Paul, MN 55104
lyda.morehouse@gmail.com
651-603-7184

JOE STINCHFIELD <joe4beth@comcast.net> Thu, Oct 1, 2:35 PM (20 hours ago)

to me

Harmony:

we at 1931 Selby support your lovely use of the city boulevard. The city staff are public servants who play a difficult role of being both enforcers when things are seriously wrong and supporters helping dedicated city residents seeking to make the city more livable. We believe your efforts add beauty and variety to a corner area that is mostly sidewalk pavement and adjacent buildings. We understand that city staff may be concerned with the need to maintain sight lines for a busy intersection. However, if city staff will work with you, an approach should be possible that maintains both public safety and civic beauty. Certainly a heavy handed enforcement approach with threats of criminal charges should not be the approach taken by city staff seeking to help citizens to enhance our city.

On your behalf, we would urge city staff to be flexible in applying standards and find a way to allow your wonderful efforts to continue. City staff may contact us. we, Joe and Beth, live at 1931 Selby Avenue. Joe has resided there since 1963. we both know and love this neighborhood and applaud efforts to make it more livable.

thank you

Joe and beth
651 644-5320

Noah Furman <nfurman1@macalester.edu> Fri, Oct 2, 11:36 AM (20 hours ago)

to me

Hello,

My name is Noah Furman and I'm a resident of Saint Paul and a neighbor of Harmony Neal. I just wanted to write a letter of support for Harmony and the gardens that they grow. These gardens are such a great provider for the local community, ensuring that those who are hungry have free food they can get. It would be a tragedy for these gardens to be removed due to one minor ordinance violation. Let's keep the gardens alive!

Best,
Noah

Milly Cogen <ecogen@macalester.edu> Fri, Oct 2, 9:48 PM (10 hours ago)

to me

Hi Harmony,

Having to defend your garden is quite an interesting task. Of course I will defend it!!!

Dear city,

Why must this garden need defending? Why must I write this email to show you that Giving Gardens is important to the community? It, in my opinion, is quite obvious why it needs to stay. Giving is community, food is community. If there is anything that can be done to ensure the safety of those visiting such a location that exhibits genuine kindness and generosity, please bring this up with Harmony. Do not plow her down. The height ordinances should be reviewed, and the Giving Gardens should stay.

With my gratitude for your attention,

Milly

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Emily Cogen (She/Her) '21

Music Major, Environmental Studies Minor

DRC Student Manager

(407) 409-0334 | ecogen@macalester.edu



MACALESTER

Jane Fallander <jfallander@gmail.com> 8:08 AM (24 minutes ago)

to me

To whom it may concern,

I am a Saint Paul resident who often drives past this garden. It's given me great pleasure to watch it grow, and I love that it also provides healthy, fresh food to others.

Please do not remove this garden.-- we're having a tough enough time this year. We should celebrate these small things that build community and bring us joy.

Respectfully,
Jane Fallander

Katy Anderson <kbanderson1892@comcast.net> 8:39 AM (20 minutes ago)

to me

Dear City of St. Paul,

We have been a residents of St. Paul (Merriam Park) since 1990 when we purchased our first home. We had a brief exodus for career reasons but chose to come back to Merriam Park where we purchased another home. I am writing in support of the neighborhood Giving Garden. It is neighborly actions such as THIS that made us want to return to Merriam Park specifically and make our home here. The giving garden gives so much to the neighborhood with community outreach, aesthetic beauty, environmental benefits, and organic nourishment. Please don't let the height of a plant take that away.

I am requesting the city acknowledge the originator of our Community Garden with a good citizen award and thank that resident for bringing such a positive entity to our neighborhood.

Thank you,

Katy Anderson
Sent from my iPhone

Kay Slack

<kay.e.slack@gmail.com>

10:48 AM (1 hour ago)

to me

To Whom It May Concern:

I am writing in support of the *Giving Gardens* at 150 Fairview Ave N., which I understand are in danger of being mowed down due to enforcement of an archaic law or ordinance which indicates that boulevard plantings should be 18-36 inches tall. This is definitely not the status quo and apparently not what people want, as, for example, there are at least 6 gardens on my block alone containing beautiful plantings over 36 inches tall.

My neighbors and I have boulevard plantings which include butterfly gardens, pollinator gardens, food gardens, and just pretty flowers for people to enjoy. I have heard many passersby commenting on the gardens, and not one has suggested that we remove them because they are too tall.

This is something the city should be happy about, that people are planting on the boulevard and improving the beauty and productivity of that land, and not something that they would be threatening to remove.

Please reconsider action against the *Giving Gardens* at 150 Fairview North.

Sincerely,

Kay Slack

slax@pobox.com

Don't Take Away the Power of Giving

Madeline Matthews
<matthews.mm@outlook.com>

Sat, Oct 3, 12:08 PM (19
hours ago)

to me

To Whom it May Concern,

It has been quite a year to say the least. Every day is a new story about shock, devastation, turmoil, and need in our world, state and within our own communities.

So when a neighbor makes a step to facilitate a semblance of community for their neighbors in a time it's not safe to be together, it's just the hope we need.

I take daily walks through Merriam Park and regularly find myself strolling through this cozy corner on Fairview. It's just me, but I'm this spot with no one else around, there's a sign of love and generosity and human life. Great care is taken to make something beautiful and restorative I those who need. Whether that's a need for produce, beauty, or a sense of togetherness.

This is a shared space that gave me something to appreciate and a way to give back if I had extra during the COVID Pandemic.

It is my understanding that the future of this Giving Garden is being threatened. Zoning laws? Boulevard plant heights? To be frank, doesn't St. Paul have bigger concerns?

I urge you to move to protect this space, as people—far more than just myself—are looking forward to it next Spring/Summer after what's sure to be an even longer winter than the last. Do something good.

All it takes is a decision to let it continue, and all of the work and care is out of your hands.

Don't block the power to give.

Madeline Matthews
Saint Paul Resident

Beth Bassett <bethbassett@comcast.net> Sat, Oct 3, 12:29 PM (19 hours ago)

to me

Forgot to sign it! Added below!

On Oct 3, 2020, at 12:28 PM, Beth Bassett <bethbassett@comcast.net> wrote:

Please accept this letter as firm support for Harmony Neal and her Giving Gardens. Now, more than ever, we need things that bring people together. A small silver lining in the pandemic is how I've come to know my neighbors better and am connecting directly with my community in ways I never have before. Harmony's Giving Gardens should be allowed to continue as designed, and used as an example for communities everywhere.

Beth Bassett
283 Wilder St N
St. Paul, MN 55104

Support for Fairview Ave Community Garden

Mellie Ernst <aernst@macalester.edu> Sat, Oct 3, 12:46 PM (19 hours ago)

to me

Hello,

My name is Mellie Ernst, and I am writing in support of the community garden and food shelf. I am new to the neighborhood, and seeing this community project has made me feel at home. What Harmony is doing is invaluable for the community, and they should not face repercussions for their actions.

Through the biodiversity, food exchange, and community information, this garden is helpful for many people and organisms in the area. I stand fully behind Harmony and I hope that you recognize the importance of this as well.

Thank you,
Mellie

M <melatetibebe@gmail.com> Sat, Oct 3, 4:01 PM (15 hours ago)

to me

Hello,

I am a resident of the Merriam Park neighborhood and am writing in support of Harmony Neal's Giving Gardens. Harmony has provided an amazing community resource that should be allowed to continue. Through their free garden and pollinator garden Harmony not only provides free food but beauty, a sense of community, and food for pollinators which benefits everyone.

Thank you for your consideration.

Melate Tibebe

Christine Miller
<christine.luhrs.miller@gmail.com>

Sat, Oct 3, 7:31 PM (12 hours ago)

to me

Dear City of Saint Paul,

I live a few houses away from Harmony Neal and have enjoyed the beauty and sense of community her Giving Garden has provided all season long. It's been an opportunity for us to connect with our neighbors, which has been especially appreciated during this isolating time during COVID-19. My four year old purposely has us walk past the "Ponyo Garden" (as he calls it, from the decorations) to see what's different/changing week to week. I've loved the chance for him to learn not only about gardens, but about how we can participate in a community.

The rule regarding vegetation height on the boulevard is grossly outdated and needs to be changed. I turn onto Fairview from Hague almost every day - sometimes multiple times a day - and the Giving Garden plants have not bothered me or limited my line of sight for pedestrians, bikers, or vehicle traffic. Especially in comparison to if cars are densely parked on Fairview which is much harder to see beyond that a tomato plant!!

Please side with our community in our plea to drop the charges against Harmony Neal and change the vegetation height limit to allow for maintained edible plants and pollinators to be a part of our landscape. I'm proud to live in Saint Paul and would like to see your decisions on this matter align with promoting these kind of wonderful things for the betterment of our neighborhood - both now and for future generations. Lastly, I'd like to thank folks like Harmony who've established Giving Gardens and pollinator gardens in Saint Paul, as I think they should be an inspiration to us all.

Sincerely,
Christine Miller
1798 Selby Ave, Saint Paul MN 55104
218-831-1780

Anna Skalicky <annkatskalicky@gmail.com> Sat, Oct 3, 9:33 PM (10 hours ago)

to me

Hello! Here's my letter of support for the giving gardens:

The Giving Gardens are a beautiful addition to the neighborhood, and it makes me incredibly sad to think that anything would happen to them. The gardens provide excellent habitat for pollinators, food for people, and they're just beautiful to look at. Rather than undermining the green space and nature we already have in our city, the city of Saint Paul should work to protect these precious natural spaces. Please protect these Giving Gardens, for both the neighborhood and the Earth.

Best,
Anna Skalicky

FB Message from Kris Robison, Merriam Park Resident, Oct. 3, 2020

I have been moved and impressed by Giving Gardens and Harmony Neal's effort and generous outreach. Giving Gardens is the kind of work that makes a neighborhood - creating connection, providing for a need and building community. All of this from a modest project of planting on a boulevard. This is the idea of neighborhood the City of St Paul trades on and should be supported when it is in action and not just an idea.

Sam Welk (via Google Docs) Sun, Oct 4, 3:53 PM (16 hours ago)

To whom it may concern:

The Giving Gardens established by Harmony Neal is a staple of our community. As the upstairs neighbors to Harmony, we have seen, heard, and felt the first-hand positive impact Harmony's gardens have had on everyone who comes across them. As an extension of the gardens themselves, Harmony has set up a food pantry with public access to support those who need it most. These Giving Gardens foster a true sense of community and better the lives of all community members. Losing these gardens would mean losing an important part of our community.

Sincerely,

Sam Welk & Virginia Dillon

150 Fairview Ave N. #2
St. Paul, MN 55104

P: (414)640-4051
E: welk.samuel1@gmail.com

Sun, Oct 4, 4:44 PM (15 hours ago)

Lindi Barrett <lindiwbarrett@gmail.com>

LETTER OF SUPPORT

I am a neighbor on Laurel Ave, and my children and I love to walk past the Giving Garden on Fairview and Hague to pick tomatoes and look at the tall corn.

I hope this little patch of tall, lush, healthy, imagination building, educational garden is allowed to stay.

This is the future. If we care about the environment, then bring food sources closer to the urban home. Cut down emissions, encourage others to grow their own food. The mental health benefits of gardening are also scientifically documented.

Sincerely,
Lindi Barrett
1805 Laurel Ave

Catherine Zimmer Tue, Sep 22, 2:53 PM (11 days ago)

to ward4, ward7

Dear Councilpersons Jalali-Nelson and Prince,

A number of citizens, including myself have planted boulevard gardens. Reasons include:

- ⊗ Native plants provide food for Bees, Birds & Butterflies,
- ⊗ Native plants diminish stormwater run-off and help keep the River and drinking water sources clean,
- ⊗ Boulevard gardens add beauty to the neighborhoods,
- ⊗ Boulevard gardens can help offset the urban heat island
- ⊗ Boulevard gardens can also be used for vegetables that provide food for both Pollinators and humans.

In 2016 the City passed a Pollinator resolution that states, in part:

"l) Encourage all property owners in the City of Saint Paul - residential, commercial, and institutional - to be more conscious of pollinator stewardship practices, including ending the purchase and sale of plants treated with systemic insecticides; planting more pollinator friendly plants on their property, including MN Native perennials; and not using pesticides, including systemic insecticides, on their property."

Despite citizen and the City's efforts, apparently both the department of inspections and some curmudgeons have not gotten the message. This year both a friend and neighbor have received citations from the City for their gardens. My neighbor at 150 Fairview Ave. N., received an award from the Star Tribune for her boulevard community garden that provided corn, herbs, tomatoes, peppers and squash to the neighborhood. She also put in a number of flowering plants and catnip for one of the neighborhood cats who is walked on a leash. I have enjoyed herbs, tomatoes and a pumpkin from the garden and, it is nice to see lovely flowering plants in the boulevard rather than true weeds such as ragweed. Yet, for all the benefits, Harmony has received not one but two citations from the city. She diligently worked to reconcile the first one but now, received yet another citation.

My friend who lives on the East Side also has boulevard gardens. She too, received a citation in the mail requiring her to clean up the "weeds" on her property. "Weeds" were not defined.

As you can imagine, receiving these citations causes considerable duress, especially when a citizen is trying to do good. Apparently the citations are automatically generated, an inspector does not physically come out and view the problem, but rather relies solely on the complainant's word. This tactic presumes guilt until proven innocent. The St. Paul Legislative Code 45.03 is unclear on what are "weeds". Yet, in SPLC 105 *Care and Maintenance of Boulevards*, "noxious weeds" are defined and (c)5. states flowers, vegetables and other plants (other than noxious weeds) may be planted in the boulevard. In the Dept. of Inspections' Notice to Cut Tall Grass and Weeds", there is no reference made to the definition of weeds, nor the height requirements of SPLC 105. These deficiencies lead to confusion.

For the City to truly support boulevard gardens and Pollinators, it appears the city code, esp. 45 needs to be updated and clarified. For example, "weeds" must be defined and updated MN Dept. of Ag's Noxious Weed list would be a good place to start. If a citizen is being cited for plantings that violate SPLC 105, that should be explained in the initial notice to cut tall grass and weeds rather than merely a notice of "nuisance". "Vermin" too, also needs updating to address our understanding of the benefits and urban ecology associated with Bats, Bees, Mice, Skunks, Snakes and Squirrels. Lastly, I suggest the Dept. of Inspections develop a letter to send to complainants that explains why the city supports Native plants and boulevard gardens, possibly asking the complainant to provide photographic proof of the problem which could relieve city inspectors and well-intentioned citizens alike.

I look forward to your responses as to how these concerns will be addressed.

Sincerely,

Catherine Zimmer

1790 Hague Ave.

St. Paul 55104

GIVING GARDENS LETTERS OF SUPPORT FROM RECENT NEIGHBORS

Allison Stiver Sat, Oct 3, 3:40 PM (16 hours ago)

to me

Greetings City Council Members,

This is a letter of support of the Giving Gardens on the corner of Fairview Ave N and Hague Ave.

In this challenging economic and social time, the Giving Gardens are a community asset and benefit. While many St. Paul families are struggling in this time, hundreds of people have used the free food and enjoyed the beauty of the gardens. They are a necessary habitat, feed pollinators as well as humans, yet their existence and community benefit is being threatened by city height ordinances that are outdated and not conducive to the pollinator plantings. These ordinances harm not only the Giving Gardens, but are also inconsistent and should not be enforced as many residential properties have plants that do not meet these standards. Instead of having the Gardens removed at the expense of the gardener, these ordinances should be updated and reconsidered to align with environmental and community best practices.

In support,
Allison Stiver

September 26th, 2020

Dear Harmony Neal
150 Fairview Ave
Saint Paul, MN

I'm writing this letter as a former resident of the Midway/Macalester Grove neighborhood, where I lived for five years until last August, in support of the "Giving Gardens" you tend in the corner of Fairview and Hague.

I witness this project grow in response to the health crisis product of the pandemic. How this garden grew from an opportunity to bring some beautiful plants to the neighborhood, to a project where fresh produce, pollinator plants, and resources were shared by a good number of the neighbors of the garden. I've also been witness to the two previous instances in which notices have arrived and your immediate and responsible follow-up with the inspector who assured you that the issues were resolved after their visit to the gardens.

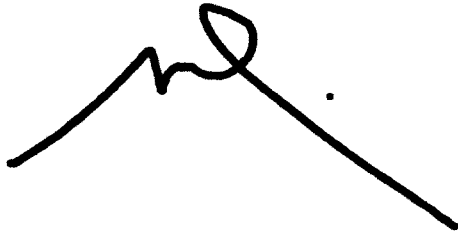
Moreover, the ordinance that is cited as the biggest issue of the gardens is related to the height of boulevard gardens, something that was dismissed by the previous inspector, and something that does not conform with the city of Saint Paul's initiative in supporting pollinator gardens.

But even more importantly, the giving garden is not just a garden. Is a community space in which the neighborhood could connect still being socially distanced, a place in which neighbors that might have been financially impacted by the pandemic could access fresh produce, and a space in which neighbors could share with others, all respecting social distancing norms.

The "Giving Gardens" are not only a recognized garden by the local press (Start Tribune) but a true asset to the community. It would be a shame if the city of Saint Paul decides to privilege an outdated ordinance that follows singular complaints about aesthetic norms and does not support a true community space that was born as a way to connect with your neighborhood in the difficult times of this pandemic.

I hope the city makes the right choice and stops this harassment and hypervigilance of a space that has done nothing but contribute to the community of Mac-Groveland in Saint Paul.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a series of connected loops and a long, sweeping tail that ends in a small dot.

Natalia Vargas Márquez, PhD
Assistant Professor, DePauw University
Former resident of Mac-Groveland/Midway in Saint Paul.

GIVING GARDENS LETTERS OF SUPPORT FROM VISITORS WHO WORK IN ST PAUL

Regina Welzant 10:14 AM (1 hour ago)

to me

To whom it my concern,

I visit the St. Paul on regular basis. I must say one of my favorite spot to stop are the giving garden on Fairview Ave. What an amazing experience and opportunity for the community to share in these gardens. Small gardens that give back to the community in a powerful way. To take these gardens away would not only impact the community but the child who benefits from the xtra food left in the cabinets. The time and effort that Harmony has put into this community and these gardens only being to show there support and kindness to the community. I do believe your community around St. Paul would benefit in more gardens like the Giving Garden.

Warm Regards,
Regina Herrlich

A gardens is a public service and having one is public duty..it is a contribution to the community-
Richardson Wright.

christina Chapman

Sun, Oct 4, 4:57 PM (14 hours ago)

to me

To Whom It May Concern;

My name is Christina Chapman, and I run a locally-owned business in the Macalester neighborhood. Upon hearing that Harmony Neal has to go to court to keep their garden, I was perplexed. Harmony is thoughtful, gracious and generous with their time and energy - who could possibly have an issue with a community garden? It is clean, neat, tidy, beautiful, doesn't encroach on the sidewalk nor the street. I've brought my children there and with Harmony we discussed pollinators, how our activities impact the earth, gardening techniques, etc. It was incredibly informative and eye-opening, and my two small kids absolutely loved it (and them!). So again, I wonder: what is the *actual* problem? Seems a little fishy.

I feel that this speaks to a larger issue of bureaucratic inefficiency. We're in the midst of a global pandemic, and instead of, I don't know, focusing efforts on health and wellness of the community, the Court has decided to waste taxpayer money griping about a COMMUNITY GARDEN?! If anything the Court should pay Harmony

for their efforts which have had a tangible, positive impact on the community. I for one am extremely interested to hear what 'reasons' are put forth for justifying a court date in a PANDEMIC over a garden. If Harmony is forced to take their garden down, I will seriously reconsider if I want to run a business here, where community growth and participation are shut down. That doesn't sound like somewhere I'd want to live or do business - would you want to??

With bated breath I await the Court's 'reasons'.

Sincerely,

Christina Chapman
General Manager

Grand Catch
1672 Grand Ave
St. Paul, MN 55105
651.348.8541 x3
grandcatchmn.com

PETITION TO SAVE THE GIVING GARDENS

We, the undersigned, believe the Giving Gardens on 150 Fairview Ave N., Saint Paul, MN, on the corner of Fairview & Hague are a positive community resource that should be protected and not torn down by the city.

Name	Address	Phone #	Date
Max Dodge	1526 Selby		9/25
Zoe Christenson	150 Snelling Ave North		9/25
Kathy Calover	1953 Selby		9/25
Dan Calver	1953 Selby		9/25
Maria Linn-Evans	1791 Hague		9/25
Isaac Evans	1741 Hague		9/25
Cyndi Bergloff	1784 Selby Apt 1		9/25
Melate Tibeke	1630 Marshall Apt 10		9/25
KEISA BECKBAUER	1854 PORTLAND AVE. #3		9/25
Rachel Carleton	1784 Selby Ave Apt #8		09/25/2020
Eric Christensen	1735 Dayton Ave.		9-26-20
Anne Maele	1668 Selby		9-26-20
Jack Otis	156 Fairview Ave N		9-28-2020
Giulberto Caldero	(9/15) 881. 0711		9/26
Timothy	1186 Hague		9/26
Sabrina Holm	Mount Centre Blvd.		9/26
Michelle Prantich	1131 Portland Ave. apt A 920 621 6185		9/26
Nepal Otis	156 Fairview Ave N		9/26/20
Colleen Sweet	1907 Ashland Ave 651-208-2183		9-26-2020
Anna Roth	1835 Randolph Ave, #7 9703/45158		9/26
Muhammad Muisan	20041 Randolph Ave		9/26
Doug Micko	1607 Laurel Ave 651-334-0031		9/26
Sally Wimpert	1769 Hague Ave 651-307-7773		9/26
Melissa Bourke	1145 Wheeler St N 651-340-7667		9-26
Alex Esch	323 Forest St North 650 924 8610		9-26

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Name	Address	Phone #	Date
Kelrina Jieber	1614 E 24 th St	5432704499	10/2/20
Anna Skalicky	1720 Berkeley	4173656396	
Kate Skalicky	1720 Berkeley	417-827-2668	
AGA MICHALA	1798 Ashland #7	(847) 910-9907	
Hilary Krufman	1783 Dayton Ave #1	917 664 6704	
Amelia Ernst	1783 Dayton Ave #1	503-956-1161	
Noah Furman	1783 Dayton Ave #1	210-238-5665	
William ummel	1519 HAGUE AVE	847 644 4444	
A SUELY ROBINSON	1555 ST LUKE AVE	218 338 0192	
Sarah Watson	1670 Hague Ave	952-244-4454	
Kate Harris	1737 Hague Ave	612-730-3569	
KENDRA HARRIS	1737 HAGUE AVE	952-454-7955	
Dana Wood	1042 Summit Ave	(651) 226-9032	
MARIA O'NEILL	1165 Summit	651-295-8528	

This is beautiful.
 (and I love Totoro
 too)! I wish you
 the best, harmony!
 Power and peace
 to you.
 Going to share with friends.

ONLINE PETITION SUPPORT

Saint Paul, September 26th, 2020.

Saint Paul City Council,

We, the undersigned neighbors of the city of Saint Paul, write to support Harmony Neal, Saint Paul resident of number 150 Farview Avenue N, and their "Giving Gardens" located on the corner of Fairview Avenue North and Hague Avenue. The gardens provide fresh produce and resources for the community and serve as food and respite for pollinators.

As a community, we value the existence of gardens like this and stand against the harassment that has led to the enforcement of an ordinance about garden height. This ordinance has been acknowledged by city inspectors as outdated and not conducive to the type of pollinator garden the city supports.

We first want to manifest our support for Harmony Neal and the Giving Garden at Fairview and Hague, and second, to demand a revision to the restrictive codes about height for boulevard gardens in Saint Paul.

Sincerely,

Add your name and neighborhood in Saint Paul below

Name Lastname, neighborhood in St Paul

Natalia Vargas Marquez, Midway

Julia Udell, Frogtown

Arnée Martin, Merriam Park

Erik Farseth, Cathedral Hill

Christa Hendrickson, Sunray-Battlecreek

Casey Jarrin, Cathedral Hill

Transcriptions of Comments that Didn't Copy Clearly from the Say Anything Notebook

Under the two potatoes drawing:

This is such an amazing gesture for the neighborhood <3

--Your neighbors @ Hague and Hershell"

What a great idea. It's neighbors like you that make a space better. Keep up the great work!! <3 --your neighbors @ Iglehart & Aldine

Page after "Thank you we've been eating cheese for the last 3 days, no veggies"

Inspired by this earnest act of community & giving.

I hope someone enjoys this coffee!

-Jas"

Under 8/10/20 note from Deborah:

8/12/20 Hi Harmony

We are so grateful that you are a Neighbor. You bring joy!

Greg & MaryBeth

1772 Laurel

Final page:

Thank you for making St. Paul a little brighter!

☺ (drawing of a flower)

Giving Gardens Quick Facts

The Giving Gardens are Non-GMO, organic, and pesticide free to protect people, pollinators, and the environment.

I've estimated that the Giving Gardens provided 150-200 pounds of fresh food for my community. I grew tomatoes, peppers, corn, beans, sugar pie pumpkins, cantaloupe, watermelon, cucumbers, lettuce, spinach, arugula, and a huge variety of herbs and edible flowers. I also planted strawberries, but they didn't do well.

The related Take Food/Leave Food cabinet has redistributed several hundreds pounds, or maybe even 1000+ pounds, of food to the local community. I clean it regularly and during the hot months put freezer packs out under produce every single day. I also have to move it on to my porch during rain and back out when the rain is gone. Several hundred pounds of garden veggies alone went through, plus assorted cans of food, bags of rice and beans, cereal, nutrition bars, fruit cups, tortillas, pouched tuna and chicken, coffee, etc have moved through the cabinet.

All season I've provide snips for harvesting, paper bags, information sheets, and hand sanitizer.

In addition to feeding humans, the gardens have been abuzz with bees and butterflies the entire season.

Clear signage about the Giving Gardens and Take Food/Leave Food cabinet are provided in English, Spanish, Somali, and Hmong.

In true community spirit, multiple neighbors donated goods for the gardens: a hose, edging from different people, mulch, and flowers were all donated, with offers of additional plants and goods that weren't needed.

From the moment the gardens appeared, people started asking if I would do it next year as well.

For many people, the gardens were the first time they've ever been able to actually see food grow. Many older adults had never seen food grow before and came by often. Parents bring their children to see food grow. Teens and young adults stop by regularly to gaze in wonder. These gardens are much loved for many reasons.

The gardens provided a real sense of community and hope and wonder in one of the most terrible years of many of our lives.

The Giving Gardens were a winner in the *Star Tribune's* 2020 Beautiful Gardens contest.

I have checked with multiple neighbors throughout the entire season to ensure the gardens do not cause visibility issues for drivers, bicyclists, or and/pedestrians. I would never endanger people.