

April 5, 2021

To: Montgomery County Council

From: Niels Nielsen, Bethesda

Re: Budget Hearing for Montgomery County Parks & Community Gardens

I am writing to support the Parks Department budget request for the new fiscal year.

For the last three years I have served as the community garden liaison for Rockinghorse Garden, working closely with Michelle Nelson. As the Covid 19 pandemic started last year, many of us wondered if closing public places would affect our access to the community garden plots. Thanks to Michelle's advocacy we were allowed to garden all year, following County guidelines for social distancing, wearing masks, and hygiene.

I'm one of many who found the garden a tremendous relief during the depths of the pandemic. Being outside in the safe setting of a garden; getting fresh air, sunshine, and exercise; enjoying the food we grew; helping hungry neighbors by donating food; and maintaining some level of human contact with each of us working our own garden plots all gave us physical, emotional, and mental benefits in a stressful time. Community gardeners across the county were all so grateful that we had this outlet.

As this picture shows in one small detail, the community gardens flourished last year. This year our plots are fully booked and a new Spring planting season has started. We are expanding our partnership with HarvestShare to grow and donate food.



Funding the Community Gardens and all of Montgomery County Parks' programs serves a wide and diverse population in our county. We have gardeners of all ages and from all over the world. I hope you will continue to fund this good work.