

Public Safety & Health Committee, Seattle City Council

Public Hearing, August 26, 1983

Event 9721 (00:20:25 – 00:23:42)

Speaker: Brita Butler-Wall

BRITTA BUTLER-WALL: My name is Britta Butler-Wall, 7034 Ravenna Avenue Northeast. I am a board member of the Ravenna-Bryant Community Association. One of my points is that, as usual, our community association received no notice of this hearing. In fact, we have never had any publicity about the P-Patch Program, even though we are near Dahl Field and, umm, a lot of people in our area like to P-Patch. Umm, I myself have had a P-Patch there for seven years and have seen the program steadily deteriorate. Uh, there are fewer services offered now than when we started specifically tilling and fertilizing. Umm, the cost has more than doubled and some of the services seem to me to be highly inappropriate. For example, sending out a newsletter with no real information that isn't already available, umm, through news--newspaper and garden stores and so on and so forth.

I think it's also inappropriate that apparently the program has attempted, umm, to add new sites over the years without particularly managing the current sites very well. In fact, our P-Patch this year, because, partly because of the drastic increase in cost, has, uh, many p--many, umm, plots un-gardened. I think the P-Patch program is absolutely needed. It has a lot of potential for recreation, for mental health, and for food. Uh, but I think that it's terribly mismanaged. I think the manager should be accountable to the P-Patchers. Umm, most people that I know cannot understand why--why we need a full-time director when, umm, we see the kind of services that have been provided and we know what the garden year looks like.

Umm, some of my suggestions are that we should have a lower rate structure for fixed income people. Umm. We should provide free seeds for people who cannot afford them. We should involve school groups, church groups, youth programs, uh, to work in the P-Patches...uh, to get food to the food banks. What I've heard so far this morning makes me even angrier, I guess, because I teach English to refugees and (not currently, but I have in the past) and I think that their farming and agricultural skills are probably superior to most of those of us who live here in the City. Umm. I don't like the idea of neighbors in a community being so worried about the appearance of a P-Patch in their...particular neighborhood. I think if you come to our P-Patch, which is up in a very, [clicks tongue; scoffs] ummm...wealthy part of town, umm, you'll find that [scoffs] our gardeners don't go to the P-Patch every day. We have some litter; we have some problems. And I think that the people that are interested in the P-Patches, uh, can work those things out for themselves. I don't th--I don't like the precedent of telling people how to run the P-Patch. Umm, I think the gardeners in the P-Patch program, plus a good manager, should make those kinds of guidelines for daily use. Umm, I hope that you continue to fund the program, but I hope you really look at what kind of managerial services are really needed and make more advantage of the expertise of the people who are already involved in the program as volunteers. Thank you.