

## Public Safety & Health Committee, Seattle City Council

Public Hearing, August 26, 1983

Event 9721 (00:36;25 – 00:41;19)

Speaker: Joe Garcia

**JOE GARCIA:** In 1981, we had a budget of \$58,000, of which about \$34,000 was general fund. In 1983, we have a \$47,000 total budget, of which \$11,600 is general fund. What the department is done between 1981 and 1983 is reduced the total cost of the program from 5,847 by about \$11,000. But the concomitant reduction in the general fund support over that period of time from \$34,000 to \$11,600, it's required that the fees be increased in order to, uh, keep the basic, uh, program operating. Uh, initially, well and up until 1982, the services that were provided were water, rototilling, and fertilizing for all the gardeners in the site. In, uh, in an effort to reduce the cost of the program, we, uh, reduced the services of rototilling and fertilizing. We now provide water only, in staple of the sites. We also do other things in terms of printing the application and making them available in the community. Each year we've reviewed the budgets with the--the, uh, council members and tried to get their input in--into what, uh, the best way to operate the program is. I think [microphone feedback] the other there is a real tension between whether the program is a recreation program, whether it's a program for low-income people. If you look at the participants, I think there are a larger number of people who would probably not be considered low-income.

In the last two years, the department has done a variety of things to, uh, involve more low-income people in program, one of which is to, uh, get a grant from the Community Services block grant. Last year to develop two sites for the specific use of low-income Asian refugees at no charge. And we've developed two of those sites for about 88 plots in them.

We've also had traditionally a Gardenship Fund to help individuals who couldn't afford the fees to pay for those. We've got approximately 52 Gardenship plots being used right now. There are 35 plots that are being gardened by individuals who have volunteered to, uh, donate all of the food from those plots to food banks. I think, as you've heard, a high percentage of--of our average gardener, uh, donates some portion of food they grow to food banks.

Many of the gardeners, I think garden because they enjoy gardening and have no other place to do it. I think it's an important program, I think, [clears throat] you know department is certainly willing to work with the advisory council, with gardeners in general, and with the counsel in looking at, uh, a variety of alternatives to improve program.