

Councilmembers

I just heard that funding of Brookside Gardens for the forthcoming year will be significantly decreased. If so, this will have a negative impact on its upkeep, expansion and programs offered.

I assume you are aware that attendance in the Gardens has increased dramatically, for Special Events as well as for just walking around the grounds and viewing the art shows and plant sales. Many of these events are free, attracting a diverse group of Community residents.

The new Propagation House was built, largely with donated funds. While parts of their Master Plan have been completed (with years of delay) or is underway, much still needs to be done. Staff are trying to make more programs available for the increasingly diverse community, with the objective of becoming more of a destination for all County residents.

I worked in the Conservatory as a volunteer gardener for 13 years. It's embarrassing that the glass roof leaks on visitors during rainstorms and must be coated with white-wash to reduce summer temperatures in the greenhouse. With advancing climate change, many afternoon visits to Wings of Fancy are still cancelled since the temperature in the South House is too high due to inadequate cooling. The very high temperatures may be ok for the butterflies, but not for the visitors, staff and volunteers who work there. On the other hand, during very cold weather, supplemental propane heaters are used to keep the tropical plants from cooling too much. Watering is still done by hand, and very little automation has been introduced. This limits what can be done in the facility.

We have a nationally recognized gem in our community and must do more to ensure its continued modernization and upkeep.

It would be useful if the Council contacts Stephanie Oberle, the Director, to schedule a guided tour for the group. That way everyone can all see how wonderful Brookside Gardens is, and how well our money is being used. While visiting, Council Members could get their daily exercise walking along the various paved and unpaved paths, and see how the garden is accessible to all visitors.)

Thanks, and keep up the good work.

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**Brookside Gardens, Len Friedman**