

# CITY OF RICHLAND CENTER - AGENDA ITEM DATA SHEET

**Agenda Item:** Report on Deferred Maintenance Concerns at the Ocooch Living History Gardens on old W. Mill St.

**Presented by:** Jasen Glasbrenner

**Meeting Date:** Public Works Committee on 06-19-2025

**Background:** As part of the City's recurring Buildings & Grounds Condition and Deferred Maintenance Reports, staff recently completed a site inspection of the Ocooch Living History Gardens, located on Old Mill Street adjacent to "Our House." The attached photos document significant deterioration in the garden's landscaping and general maintenance condition.



Observed issues include invasive weed growth, overgrown and unmanaged vegetation, failing edging, and overall aesthetic decline. There is preliminary indication that the site may have been established with grant funding; staff are actively researching any restrictions or obligations that may apply.

At present, the site does not reflect the standards expected of public green spaces and raises concerns about long-term rehabilitation costs, landscape integrity, and community perception. Due to the nature and original intent of the space, this matter may also warrant consideration by the Park Board.

## Maintenance Strategy Options:

- 1) Maintaining current maintenance as part of the regular Buildings & Grounds work schedule.
  - This is not a viable option when considering priority and current staffing levels
- 2) Consider decommissioning the Gardens and removing them completely.
  - Grant dollars were received from the DNR that would have to be checked on (≈ year 2005)
- 3) Allocate approximately \$5,000-\$15,000 in funding to have a contractor revitalize the gardens.
- 4) Exploring partnerships with community groups (e.g., clubs, service organizations) to assist with upkeep or enhancement.
  - This is not a viable option with current staff levels of Public Works, however, this could be an initiative of another group.

**Department Recommendation:** Staff is requesting Committee review and input on how to proceed with the Ocooch Living History Gardens. Due to the garden's current disrepair and lack of sponsor involvement, guidance is needed to move forward.

## Action Requested:

**Public Works:** Motion to adopt Maintenance Strategy Option #\_\_\_\_\_ for the Ocooch Living History Gardens on old W. Mill St.