

**URBAN AGRICULTURE COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES
Wednesday January 8, 2020
City Hall (300 Monroe Ave. NW)**

Call to Order - Meeting was called to order at 5:32 p.m.

Roll Call

Present: Connie Bohatch, Joan Huyser-Honig, Steve Krogman, Jill Myer, Kristen Trovillion, Rori Jean Trench, Liz Visser, Dave Zimmerman

Absent: Lisa Oliver-King, Crystal Tunstall, Tema (Ayanfe) Jamison, Eleanor Moreno

Other: Wende Randall (ENFT), Catherine Zietse (City staff)

Approval of Agenda

Motion made by Rori Weston, supported by Dave Zimmerman, to approve the January 8 agenda as presented. Carries unanimously.

Approval of Minutes

Motion by Liz Visser, supported by Jill Myer, to approve the November 13 minutes as presented. Carries unanimously.

Public Comments

None.

Round Robin Announcements

- Liz Visser – Blandford 2020 CSA shares are open and she is planning for the upcoming season
- Kristen Trovillion – GRPS is continuing work to inventory school gardens and green schoolyards of each school site, with surveying will take place this summer.
- Rori Jean Trench – Fulton Street Farmers Market is continuing their second season market and annual strategic planning with the board.
- Steve Krogman – The Parks Department finished a pilot project for organic fertilizer in four parks and are planning to expand to more sites this year. Kristen also shared that GRPS is testing similar methods at sites thanks to training provided through this pilot project.
- Dave Zimmerman – Work continues at Plaza Roosevelt. Habitat is slowing production for 2020 due to staffing levels, but has set a new 10-year goal to build 240 new homes.
- Connie – The City Attorney's Office confirmed that the Aquinas goat pilot project does not need to go before City Commission, and so Aquinas will be putting together an implementation plan to be reviewed by Code Compliance, after which they will enter into a Memorandum of Understanding.

Old Business

2020 Neighborhood Summit Workshop Proposal

The theme for this year's Neighborhood Summit is "Growing Community & Justice." The Neighborhood Summit Committee requested that proposals include the topic, presenters, a session description, and any resources that will be provided. The committee needs to decide what will be presented tonight in order to submit a proposal. Liz Visser suggested that we should have tangible ways people can get involved should be included in whatever is done, based on resident feedback from our July 2019 meeting.

After further discussion, the committee decided to have a resource table with the 2020 status report, handouts, and seed packet giveaways rather than a full workshop session.

Catherine Zietse will follow up with Jordoun Eatman to reserve a table. Kristen Trovillion will follow up on student volunteer opportunities to fill the seed packets.

New Business & Discussion Items

2020 Status Report

Joan Huyser-Honig presented a draft status report that details committee goals and progress thus far, what we have learned, and how the community can get involved. The digital version will have website links embedded. She also debated adding committee member profiles but tried to keep the report one-page front-back. She opened the floor for comments.

Joan inquired if there were any updates on the City Planner position. Connie Bohatch replied that the position is open, but there is no firm date on when final decisions will be made.

Jill Myer suggested to include forthcoming items the committee will be addressing such as composting, goats, urban edibles, etc. Joan replied they are covered in the “examples of what we’ve learned so far” section. Liz Visser suggested we take advantage of Summit attendees to get feedback on how we can best do community outreach and how people would like to be involved.

Joan Huyser-Honig will update the report and send out for further review.

Policy Research and Recommendations

Accessory Structures

Lisa Oliver-King and Liz Visser had a lot of questions about the current code in Grand Rapids related to accessory structures, and as they began researching they wanted to follow up with residents who have had past issues or concerns with the ordinance to see what changes they would want in a future process. Liz Visser shared her preliminary research of other mid-sized cities, where she found that most ordinances are similar in terms of size and definition of accessory structure codes. Most have a maximum number of 2 allowed, with limited square footage. Per her conversation with City Planner Elizabeth Zeller, the City is not likely to change ordinance to allow greenhouses in front yards. Liz proposes creating navigation resources to make people aware that we can have greenhouses, there are just certain limitations.

Catherine Zietse asked Liz if her research included hoopouses. Liz replied most cities did not specify rules for hoopouses. Most accessory structure codes meant for personal use, and more clarity is needed on how that changes when it becomes a commercial scale.

Farm Stands

Rori Jean Trench presented her research on what other cities are doing related to farm stands. She reported that most codes distinguish urban farms from personal market gardens, although the difference is sometimes unclear. Some cities such as Racine, WI and New York City, NY allow residents to grow and sell produce on vacant lots. From her perspective running a farmers market and from a liability standpoint, unprocessed fruits and vegetables would be the only thing that should be sold off of a private residence. She asked opinions from other committee members.

There was discussion on the distinction between a farmers market and farm stands, and how concepts of each might differ by neighborhood. Most farmers market have multiple vendors and vendors that are

able to offer government benefits for their products, while selling produce and/or produces at farm stands is often more related with community gardens than at private residences. More clarification would be needed from the City Clerk's office about when a business license is required.

Connie Bohatch reminded the committee that when recommending policy changes to City staff, it all goes back to laying out what would we like to see happen, and then working with City staff to determine the best way to get there.

Joan Huyser Honig stated that if the committee's or the City's emphasis is on equity, we should make it easy for anyone to raise and sell on their own land. What issues might arise with that?

Liz Visser agreed that issues of food safety are undeniable as some crops are more susceptible for blight, pests, etc., and the committee will need to clearly address that in recommendations. Jill Myer offered that a residential farm stand ordinance would need to be very specific on the type of property, only selling whole food, food can be out for a certain amount of time, and additional descriptions. It would also be good to have signage requirements for transparency on where the food was grown and by whom. Rori Weston added that neighborhood association approval would be helpful in notifying neighbors and ensuring formal approval comes from the property owner. Connie Bohatch added that property owner approval is necessary because ultimately, any code violation goes to the property owner, not the tenant.

The committee consensus was that separate recommendations should be created for residential and commercial sites. Joan asked that farm stands research clarify residential versus non-residential properties. Rori will revise and send before next meeting.

Meeting adjourned 6:54 pm

Next Meeting – March 11, 5:30 pm at City Hall (300 Monroe NW), Conf. Room 601

URBAN AGRICULTURE COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES
Wednesday March 11, 2020
City Hall (300 Monore NW)

Call to Order - Meeting was called to order at 5:35 p.m.

Roll Call

Present: Connie Bohatch, Joan Huyser-Honig, Tema (Ayanfe) Jamison, Steve Krogman, Jill Myer, Kristen Trovillion, Crystal Tunstall

Absent: Lisa Oliver-King, Rori Jean Trench, Liz Visser, Dave Zimmerman

Other: Carlos Calderon, Alex Beecroft, Catherine Zietse (City staff liaison)

Approval of Agenda

Motion made by Connie Bohatch, supported by Jill Myer, to approve the March 11 agenda as presented. Carries unanimously.

Approval of Minutes

Motion by Steve Krogman, supported by Kristin Trovillion, to approve the January 8 minutes as presented. Carries unanimously.

Public Comments

Carolos Calderon introduced himself – he works for the Lower Grand River Organizations of Watersheds with the Grand Valley Metro Council. He is interest in urban agriculture, specifically the effects of agriculture on aquatic environments. He met some of the committee members at Neighborhood Summit and is interested to know more about our potential mapping/GIS needs.

Alex Beecroft attended the committee's session at Neighborhood Summit and is looking to get connected with urban agriculture initiatives. He has been a farmhand in the area for the last five years.

Wende Randall from ENTF shared that the Food and Nutrition Committee will be working on emergency planning and response for food security in response to COVID-19. If there are any food system partners that should be at the table, let her know. They are already talking with local food pantries, YMCA, Kids Food Basket, and school districts. Joan Husyer-Honig suggested they involve charter schools as well.

Round Robin Announcements

- Jill Myer – As of tonight there are two presumptive cases of COVID-19 in the state, and many more are being tested.
- Steve Krogman – no updates
- Kristen Trovillion – No big updates for the schoolyard habitats and gardens inventory project, but they will be meeting with software development organization next month. The project will be ongoing through the fall.
- Connie Bohatch – The City is waiting on Aquinas for their outreach plan, after which they will meet with Aquinas, Munchers on Hooves, and City Staff. The Community Development Department has also launched their 8th federal grant program for lead-based paint remediation, but there are a lot of places in Grand Rapids where the soil is contaminated as well. Connie

asked the group to consider this topic as a future agenda item and how they could provide community education on this topic.

- Ayanfe Jamison asked what current resources are available for lead testing. MSU Extension has lead soil testing for a fee. Our Kitchen Table provides free soil testing through participation in some of their programs.
- Catherine Zietse – Working on sharing the 2020 Committee Status Report with Commissioners
- Ayanfe Jamison – The New City growing season is beginning with seed starters and CSA sign-ups. There are some conflicts with the church regarding future growing seasons.
- Crystal Tunstall – The newly-formed NAACP environmental justice group is working on increasing awareness, education and literacy. They are looking at doing a town hall about topics such as food sovereignty, lead, and water and air pollution in the Madison-Hall corridor. They also want to introduce youth to professionals and colleges in environmental fields.
 - Carlos Calderon suggested the group look for funding opportunities through the EPA's Office of Environmental Justice, particularly the Collaborative Problem-Solving Cooperative Agreement Program.
- Joan Huyser-Honig – no updates

Old Business

2020 Neighborhood Summit Report Out

Jill Myer, Joan Huyser-Honig, and Catherine Zietse attended Neighborhood Summit this past weekend to represent the committee. There was a resource table with outreach materials, comment cards, an interest sign-up sheet and seed packet giveaways (prepared by Kristen and the Earth Savers Club at Congress Elementary). There was also a poster with dot polling, asking people to prioritize policy topics. See the end of the minutes for results of the dot polling.

The committee also hosted a workshop session in the afternoon, which was a panel discussion on the status of urban agriculture in Grand Rapids. Panel members were Lisa Oliver-King, Joan Huyser-Honig, and Garrett Ziegler (Community Food Systems Educator with Kent County MSU Extension). We were pleased to see a full room of interested residents and that the City Manager stopped by the session for a few minutes. Overall the event was well attended, we made many connections with interested residents, and got the word out about our committee.

Updates on Policy Research and Recommendations

Rori and Liz both reported before the meeting that they are still working on updating research for farm stands and accessory structures, respectively. Agenda item postponed until the May meeting.

New Business & Discussion Items

Community Engagement

We have talked about ways to continue engaging this community this growing season. Ayanfe Jamison suggested we replicate the dot polling that was at Summit at upcoming growing events this spring such as the Growers Fare (Downtown Market, March 21, 10:00 am – 1:30 pm) and the Community Seed Exchange event (Kentwood Library, March 28, 10:00 am – 2:00 pm). Crystal Tunstall will follow up about getting a table at the Seed Exchange event. Catherine will follow up to share materials and seeds to Ayanfe and Crystal.

Joan Huyser-Honig asked about the best way for the committee to have a presence at farmers markets. Alex Beecroft will be at the Fulton Street Farmers Market coffee cart on multiple dates this

spring to promote the Gather to Bloom festival and is happy to gather data there as well. Catherine will confirm dates.

Joan Huyser-Honig asked how the committee might capitalize on opportunities for community engagement at the three upcoming committee meetings in 2020 that will take place outside of City Hall (May 13 at Richmond Park, July 8 at Baxter, and September 9 at MSU Extension). Catherine reminded the committee that our heavily advertised public meeting last year at Garfield Park was an open engagement portion, followed by a regular committee meeting. Public turnout was great, but we did not have a quorum to hold an official meeting. Connie Bohatch added that it was challenging because it seemed that residents wanted more information rather than just the opportunity to share comments. Catherine suggested to create a public informational session on an urban agriculture topic prior to the committee business portion of the May 13 meeting. Alex Beecroft, Jill Myer, and Ayanfe Jamison volunteered to explore further. They will continue to discuss via email.

Crystal Tunstall shared that the NAACP and Urban Core Collective are planning a 3rd Ward Earth Day Celebration on Saturday April 18th at MLK Park from 1:00 – 4:00 pm. The committee agreed to host a resource table with the same materials from Neighborhood Summit. Wende Randall suggested the committee also look into the Rock the Block event in June.

Joan Huyser-Honig inquired what the committee wants people to learn or takeaway from these events. Alex Beecroft shared that from the Neighborhood Summit session, most residents seem to want a greater awareness of what they can and can't do under current ordinances. Kristen Trovillion asked if the committee has created a Frequently Asked Questions document that shares common misconceptions about agriculture rules in Grand Rapids. It would be a helpful resource to have at tabling events and online. Catherine shared that the current FAQ the committee developed focuses more on the basics of urban agriculture – what it is, why it's important, etc. Connie agreed that it would be a good idea to develop something that addresses common misconceptions. For example, a lot of people think they are not allowed to compost.

Jill Myer shared that from her notes at the Neighborhood Summit panel, people had the most questions regarding composting, local resources, lead testing, gardening on vacant lots, and front yard gardening.

Committee Vacancies

There are currently two vacancies on the committee. Applications are open year-round through the Clerk's office, so committee members can share with anyone who might be interested. Once submitted, applications are on file for one year. Connie Bohatch added that if the committee makes a recommendation for a certain applicant, it is helpful for the commissioners on the Committee of Appointments to know committee representation has been considered. Joan Huyser-Honig and Jill Myer will revisit applications in a couple weeks.

Wende Randall asked for clarification on if the May 13 meeting would still have a portion of committee business or if it would be entirely a public engagement event.

Meeting adjourned at 6:19 p.m.

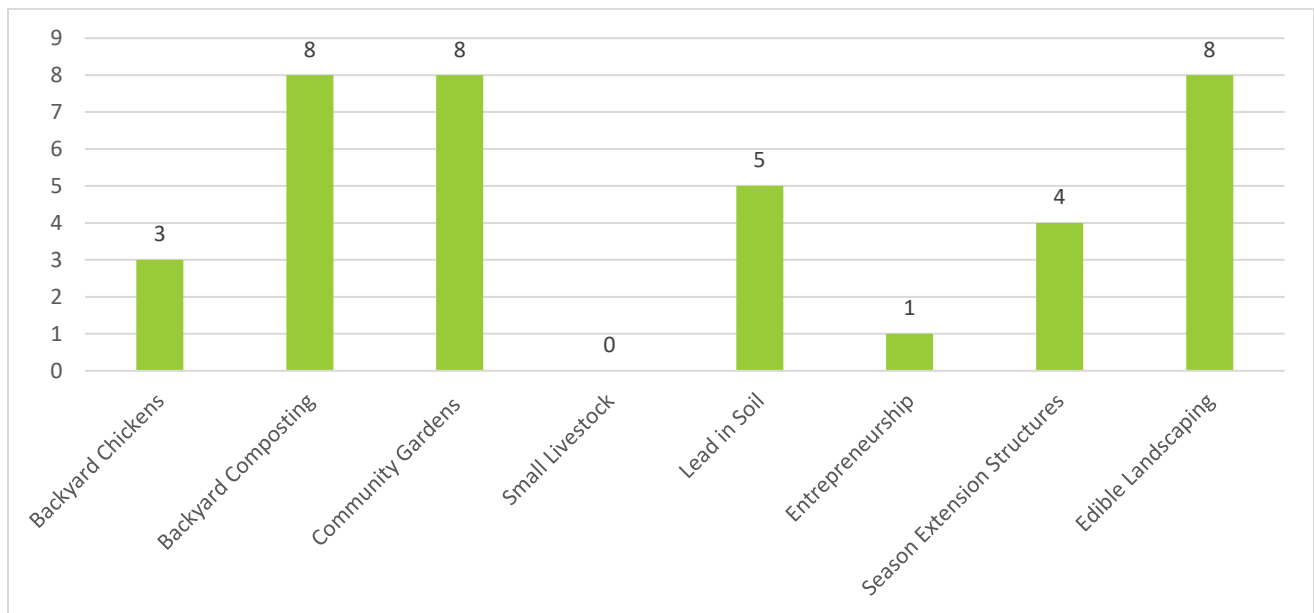
Next Meeting – May 13, 5:30 pm at Richmond Park pavilion (1101 Richmond St. NW)

TELL US! What topics are most important to you?

**Where should we focus our efforts to increase access to urban agriculture in Grand Rapids?
Which aspects matter most in building a community that encourages residents to
grow, harvest, and sell local food?**

-
- Backyard Chickens
 - Backyard Composting
 - Community Gardens on vacant or public land
 - Raising small animals like rabbits, goats or bees
 - Lead in Soil - testing and resources
 - Entrepreneurial opportunities at farm stands and farmers markets
 - Season Extension Structures on residential land (greenhouses, hoopouses, etc.)
 - Edible Landscaping - prioritizing fruits, nuts, vegetables, and herbs on public lands and parkways (between street and sidewalk)

Results:



**URBAN AGRICULTURE COMMITTEE
DRAFT MEETING MINUTES
Wednesday May 13, 2020
Webex**

Call to Order - Meeting was called to order at 5:37 p.m.

Roll Call

Present: Connie Bohatch, Joan Huyser-Honig, Steve Krogman, Kristen Trovillion, Crystal Tunstall, Liz Visser, Dave Zimmerman

Absent: Jill Myer, Rori Jean Trench, Lisa Oliver-King, Tema (Ayanfe Jamison)

Other: Paul Haan (Healthy Homes Coalition), Wende Randall (ENTF), Emily Madsen (HWMUW), Catherine Zietse (City staff liaison)

Approval of Agenda

Motion made to approve the May 8 agenda as presented. Carries unanimously.

Approval of Minutes

Motion by Steve Krogman, supported by Kristen Trovillion, to approve the March 11 minutes as presented. Carries unanimously.

Public Comments

Emily Madsen is joining the meeting tonight in her new role at Heart of West Michigan United Way.

Round Robin Announcements

- Steve Krogman – Parks in Grand Rapids are open, however many amenities like playgrounds and bathrooms are closed. The Fulton Street Farmers Market remains open as well, but with limited capacity of 66 people.
- Kristen Trovillion – Distance learning in place for GRPS schools and many other projects are on hold; however, the green schoolyard features inventory project can be accomplished with social distancing and remote work and is full speed ahead.
- Crystal Tunstall – Has been assisting New City Neighbors with their plant sale which has been moved to May 30th. She reports that New City is sold out for spring CSA shares and is almost sold out for summer shares. New City accepts EBT cards for produce shares and has stock set aside specifically for customers using EBT.
- Dave Zimmerman – Habitat for Humanity has been closed since March 13 and will start to open next week.
- Liz Visser – Field trips and educational programming at Blandford Nature Center have been shut down since Mid-March, but the farm has been fully operational. They have seen great interest in CSA shares and have sold out for the summer.
- Connie Bohatch – Her recent job duties have focused mainly on emergency response. The Community Development Department had been working with Aquinas College to bring Munchers on Hooves to campus in June – this has been postponed until next year as Jessica Bowen will be on maternity leave this summer.
- Joan Huyser-Honig – Sent a letter to Governor Whitmer on behalf of the committee in April about the essential nature of garden-related businesses as it relates to food equity. She got a response from Mayor Bliss that this topic was on her legislative agenda to discuss with the governor. She also got responses from multiple city commissioners.

Guest Presentation - Lead Contamination in Soil

Paul Haan from Healthy Homes Coalition was present to share information on testing resources and safety tips for lead soil. Joan Huyser-Honig asked him specifically if there is free testing available for community members, and what portion of people who want to get their soil tested can do so.

Paul shared that testing is done through private sector, so it is not free. The current rate at GPI Laboratories is \$14.20 for paint chips or soil. Composite soil samples must be self-collected, and there is an instruction sheet released by the EPA that details how collection should be done. Health Homes Coalition also just published an instructional video on this (available on their [YouTube channel](#)).

Paul recommends all urban garden spaces get tested, and when in doubt assume there is lead in the soil. A number of years ago, Healthy Homes Coalition did soil sampling of community gardens around Grand Rapids and found lead levels above 100 ppm. Background levels of lead in soil for the state of Michigan is 21 parts per million, which is far below the EPA recommended amount that is safe for children to play in soil (400 ppm). The major concern should be gardening near the house where lead from paint chips or drip lines can contaminate the soil. Phytoremediation (uptake of lead by plant roots) is not a high concern unless there are very high concentrations of lead in the soil.

That being said, there are some simple and effective preventative measures that can be taken to protect residents (especially children) from lead in soil, such as removing garden shoes before entering the house, washing hands and showering immediately after working in the garden, and thoroughly cleaning vegetables before eating. It is also very important to cover bare soil and make sure children are not playing in bare soil.

Joan Huyser-Honig asked if it is recommended to collect samples from every side of the house. Paul Haan replied that yes, soil should be tested at each garden location. Connie Bohatch added that the City often encourages residents to bring in a good layer of topsoil to mitigate soil contamination.

Joan Huyser-Honig then asked if Healthy Homes Coalition has found price to be a barrier for people wanting to get their soil tested for lead. Paul thought that cost was one factor, but equally so was knowledge that testing should be done and the inconvenience of collecting and delivering samples. More people would do it if testing was free, however the challenge is the deployment method and there is no one-size-fits-all solution to soil testing for urban gardens.

Connie Bohatch added that the Community Development Department gets fairly regularly calls from residents who want to have their home tested for something but do not have the resources to do so, however, she does not recall anyone asking the specific question about lead in soil (although that might change with increased public education).

Committee Business

Impacts of COVID-19 on Local Food System

Joan Huyser-Honig opened the floor for discussion on how the global pandemic has impacted the local food system. She asked committee members what they are hearing from the community and what action or education the committee might recommend.

Crystal Tunstall shared that she has had many conversations with people who have a new interest in gardening and purchasing local food. Joan Huyser-Honig echoed that she has been asked advice from many friends who have never gardened before.

Wende Randall added it is great to hear that lot of farms are selling out of CSA shares, and it will be increasingly important that local food producers are able to accept food assistance programs or offer products at a sliding scale.

Joan inquired into the status of the food supply chain and emergency food operations in Grand Rapids. Wende Randall shared that ENTF's primary focus has been ensuring meal distribution is available across the county, and there is currently a lot of free food available for both youth and adults at 300+ sites. Some pantries are seeing increases of new people, while some pantries are beginning to stabilize and Wende said partners are doing a great job at communicating with each other and sharing best practices. The local philanthropic community has mobilized quickly to ensure that funds are available for both established organizations and new partners distributing free food or meals, and there is more federal funding on the way for food distribution. The biggest concerns right now is addressing residents' presumed limitations to receive food (ID, citizenship, etc.) and also trying to maintain a high level of effectiveness for emergency food distribution while employing strategies to address the root issues so people can eventually move out of emergency food system.

Connie Bohatch stated that Wende has done a phenomenal job managing an effective response among so many community organizations and partners.

Liz Visser shared that while there have been rumors of disruptions to the larger food system, like meat distributors, the best thing the committee can do is continue to empower residents to grow their own food and connect them to local growers. The committee has discussed community engagement at length, and more focus should be spent on providing virtual engagement and online resources.

311 Scripts & Resident FAQ Documents

Catherine Zietse shared existing scripts regarding urban agriculture topics from the City's 311 Customer Service Department. This is one way the City provides education to residents on urban agriculture. Topics include composting, gardening on City property, community gardens, beekeeping, backyard chickens, and nuisance violations regarding tall grass and animals. She asked the committee if the current content covers all questions that residents might have regarding these topics and if there are any topics missing. Any missing content can be developed with the appropriate City department to update 311 scripts. Scripts can also be used to create an online policy guide for residents.

Liz Visser agreed that information on lead soil testing should be included. Joan Huyser-Honig suggested including a question and answer on harvesting fruit or edible landscaping on public land, although clarification is needed from the city on what the official answer is. Connie Bohatch advised to stay factual on what currently is/is not allowed instead of what might change based on committee recommendations.

Catherine Zietse asked Connie Bohatch for clarification on backyard chickens at rental properties. No, Grand Rapids does not allow this.

Liz Visser stated that when comparing the current scripts with community priorities from dot polling results at Neighborhood Summit (composting, chickens, and edible landscaping), the existing answers are comprehensive.

Catherine Zietse will draft additional content based on the draft presented to share with the committee at the next meeting.

Future Agenda Items

Updated research on accessory structures and farm stands are on the agenda for the July meeting. Liz Visser reminded the committee that after her initial research on accessory structures, she found that Grand Rapids was similar to many other cities and she is advocating for increased education. More clarification needed on the ordinance application to nonprofit and commercial farms.

Motion made by Liz Visser, supported by Steve Krogman, to move the July meeting to a virtual format. Motion carries.

Meeting adjourned at 6:40 p.m.

Next Meeting – July 8, 5:30 pm, Webex meeting

**URBAN AGRICULTURE COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES
Wednesday July 08, 2020
Webex**

Call to Order - Meeting was called to order at 5:38 p.m.

Roll Call

Present: Joan Huyser-Honig, Jill Myer, Lisa Oliver-King, Kristen Trovillion, Crystal Tunstall, Liz Visser

Absent: Connie Bohatch, Tema Jamison, Rori Jean Trench, Steve Krogman, Dave Zimmerman

Other: Wende Randall (ENTF), Catherine Zietse (City staff liaison)

Approval of Agenda

Motion made by Jill Myer, supported by Joan Huyser-Honig, to approve the July 8 agenda as presented. Carries unanimously.

Approval of Minutes

Motion made by Jill Myer, supported by Lisa Oliver-King, to approve the May 13 minutes as presented. Carries unanimously.

Public Comments

None

Round Robin Announcements

- Jill Myer is working mostly on contact tracing COVID-19 cases in Kent County.
- Wende Randall shared a request for input on the Michigan Good Food Charter updates (survey available [HERE](#)). She also reported that the Kent County Food Policy Council formation team received funding to hire part time staff position (through ENTf/United Way) to implement development plan and begin seeking members.
- Liz Visser – Blandford had laid off half of staff due to programming and budget cuts, however the farm is doing very well and is looking to expand where they can to meet the demand for fresh, local food.
- Crystal Tunstall – no updates
- Lisa Oliver-King– starting farmers market this Saturday (11-4) and have partnership with Baxter Community Center to have market on Thursdays. The food growing program with MLK Academy families is continuing this summer.
- Kristen Trovillion – GRPS' new superintendent Dr. Roby started July 1 and there is virtual meet and greet on July 9 on Facebook. School will look different in the fall but planning is still underway. She has been working on inventorying school gardens and outdoor learning spaces, with hopes to have it completed by this fall in order to utilize outdoor learning spaces for social distancing and COVID-19 prevention. Her position was one of the many eliminated with recent budget cuts, however she has not been given an effective date yet. Things might change if the district receives additional federal relief funding.
- Catherine Zietse – The Parks Dept. is busy reopening amenities and starting free outdoor fitness classes. Construction is/will soon be underway at 18 parks for improvements with millage funding, including major green infrastructure projects at Clemente and Ken-O-Sha parks.

Committee Business

Updates on Policy and Best Practices Research

Liz Visser updated the accessory structure document with a recommendation to better distinguish between agriculture-related structures on residential and commercial properties. The ordinance should be more permissive for a business or organization seeking to grow food on a larger scale.

Catherine Zietse added that the Planning Department requires a zoning permit for all accessory structures, which includes a \$22 fee. The committee felt this fee is not unreasonable and should remain.

Rori Trench updated the farm stand document. Joan Huyser-Honig restated the current recommendation to clearly define a permit process and specify the space of the stand and quantity allowed to be sold. Rori's research stated that many cities limit the number of days in a year that products can be sold. The committee was in agreement that the research and recommendations document is good to share with the City to begin a conversation on what might be possible.

Updates on Online Urban Agriculture Policy Guide

Catherine Zietse reported that the guide is now published and available online and is the first thing that appears when searching "urban agriculture". She hopes it will be a good resource for residents.

<https://www.grandrapidsmi.gov/Directory/Guides/Urban-Agriculture-Guide>

New Business

Member Vacancies

Joan Huyser-Honig reported that the committee currently has two vacancies, with a current pool of 7 applicants. We are waiting for all candidates to be vetted through the City Clerk's Office. She asked the committee what specific skill sets, demographics, or interests we should be looking for in our next members.

Lisa Oliver-King shared her priorities for representation across the city and that it would be good to find an African American male for a committee seat. Someone who knows the community well is also important.

Liz Visser shared that a desired skill set will depend on the projects the committee wants to work on moving forward. Her priorities are someone with strong communications and outreach experience that can support education workshops and materials to make ordinances easier to understand for the common public.

Collaboration with the Urban Forestry Committee

Joan Huyser-Honig attended the Urban Forestry Committee meeting last month to learn more about their work and potential areas for collaboration. She learned that edible trees count towards the tree canopy as long as the tree is tall enough for someone to stand underneath it for shade, and that there is more flexibility in approved tree species list than first thought.

Two potential projects could include recommending edible trees to include in the approved tree species list and collaboration on mapping edible trees and bushes. Joan asked the committee if there were other projects that the two committees could work together on.

Kristen Trovillion suggested including guidelines and locations for growing edible trees with the tree list, such as what is okay to plant in the right-of-way. Liz Visser suggested also including recommended sources for edible trees.

Joan will schedule a meeting with Abigail Bruins (UFC chair) and Kristen Trovillion to discuss potential joint projects.

Edible landscaping mapping project

Joan Huyser-Honig reminded the committee of the project to map edible trees and bushes in the city and asked the committee if they had connections with area colleges and universities that might be interested in a service-learning opportunity. The project (as shared in the 2020 committee status report) is to:

Help map existing edible trees in public spaces in Grand Rapids. Friends of Grand Rapids Parks, Calvin University, and other organizations have digital maps that include apples, cherries, plums, chestnuts, hickory nuts, and more. We need a unified map that verifies the location of edible trees and notes whether they're actually accessible. This would be a great service-learning project for a master gardener or college class.

Priority areas to start would be updating existing maps and where we have students available to do the work. Joan added that it is likely that schools will be in need of virtual & individual projects in this season of distance learning.

Crystal Tunstall can connect with students and faculty at Grand Valley State University. Catherine Zietse can share with faculty connections at Calvin University. Liz Visser can share with the Cornerstone biology professor doing an insect survey at Blandford Farm.

Future Agenda Items

Catherine Zietse expressed interest in hearing the results of the Cornerstone University study on biodiversity of insects in urban gardens. Lisa Oliver-King offered the school garden at MLK Academy as an additional survey site if needed.

Meeting adjourned at 6:26 pm

Next Meeting – September 9, 5:30 pm, Webex

**URBAN AGRICULTURE COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES
Wednesday September 09, 2020
Webex**

Call to Order - Meeting was called to order at 5:33 p.m.

Roll Call

Present: Joan Huyser-Honig, Lisa Oliver-King, Liz Visser, Connie Bohatch, Steve Krogman, Crystal Tunstall

Absent: Jill Myer, Dave Zimmerman, Tema (Ayanfe) Jamison, Rori Jean Trench

Other: Wende Randall (ENTF), Alita Kelly (Southeast Market), Catherine Zietse (City staff liaison)

Approval of Agenda

Motion made by Lisa Oliver-King, supported by Liz Visser, to approve the September 9 agenda as presented. Carries unanimously.

Approval of Minutes

Motion made by Lisa Oliver-King, supported by Joan Huyser-Honig, to approve the July 8 minutes with clerical edits. Carries unanimously.

Public Comments

None.

Round Robin Announcements

- Wende Randall – Kent County Essential Needs Task Force and the Food and Nutrition Coalition is developing a messaging campaign to change the local narrative around food insecurity. Additionally, the Food Policy Council is creating a 1-pager policy agenda shaped from 2019 community listening sessions and is hiring a coordinator position, moving the group closer to being able to extend member invitations and formally begin their work.
- Liz Visser – Blandford is transitioning into fall crops and is beginning to plan for next year as an organization for programs and production.
- Lisa Oliver-King – Our Kitchen Table is transitioning food growing program and farmers market into the fall season. They have served over 130 families with food assistance with COVID relief response fund.
- Steve Krogman – The Parks Department has expanded their organic turf maintenance program to six parks this year; program continues to do well.
- Crystal Tunstall – Worked with New City Neighbors and Other Way Ministries over the summer to develop a virtual gardening curriculum with a mix of video lessons and packets delivered to kids. Topics included growing and preparing food, environmental sustainability, etc. She is now a fulltime professor at GVSU in the Environmental Studies Department.
- Connie Bohatch – Her current work is focused on COVID response through coordinating federal funding, emergency food assistance, eviction moratoriums, etc. Issues of access to fresh food and self-sustaining food sources are brought to the forefront during the pandemic.
- Catherine Zietse – Coordinating edible landscape mapping with higher ed institutions. Other current work in the Parks Department includes a smoke-free parks policy and outdoor gear lending library through the Thrive Outside initiative.

Committee Business

Edible Landscape Mapping Project

The committee will be working with area colleges and universities to unify and update digital maps of publicly accessible edible trees in Grand Rapids. Crystal Tunstall volunteered to incorporate the mapping project in two of her fall courses – we have the opportunity to present to her class on October 19 at 4:30 pm and October 20th at 1:00 pm. Committee members interested in participating should contact Joan or Catherine.

Updates on other potential classes:

- Catherine Zietse heard back from a geography professor at Calvin University, who thought it would work best in his spring semester course on Planning for Urban Sustainability.
- Liz Visser shared the project with Justin Burdine at Cornerstone University, who did not see a good fit for a class but would share the opportunity with students for an individual research project.
- Wende Randall will connect the committee with ENTF team member Brianne Robach for a potential connection to Aquinas College geography department.

GVSU Public Health Class

Catherine Zietse received a request to present about the Urban Agriculture Committee work at a GVSU Public Health Class with Dr. Julia VanderMolen on September 30th at 3:00 p.m. Lisa Oliver-King offered to be a presenter. Any other interested committee members should contact Catherine for more details.

Collaboration with Urban Forestry Committee

Joan Huyser-Honig is trying to schedule a meeting with Urban Forestry Committee to discuss opportunities for collaboration. Lisa Oliver-King mentioned possibilities that have been raised in her programming such as tapping trees for maple syrup, making acorn flower, or determining the right leaves for composting. Catherine Zietse will connect Joan to UFC chair.

New Business

Guest Presentation on Southeast Market

Alita Kelly shared her plans for opening the Southeast Market in Boston Square neighborhood. The market has a storefront in the Boston Square neighborhood and will start with a soft launch this fall with 30 partners who have committed to \$50 of purchases a week. The Southeast Market will open to the public once it is set up to accept SNAP and other benefits.

Her goal is to reduce food waste and increase access to fresh food by using a hybrid market model that is a combination of consignment and commercial food distribution chain. She is hoping to subsidize local food to affordable prices and is currently building relationships with local farms who would be interested in that mission. She also has long-term plans to grow some of the food on sight.

Alita is open to ideas and suggestions from the committee about how to market work well for the community, specifically seniors. She is planning a pilot program with Adams Apartments, and is also applying for a Prescription for Health program grant.

Alita also received a Neighborhood Match fund to launch the MLK Freedom School with NAACP, which will be a youth program this fall at the Center for Community Transformation teaching lessons on past

and current civil rights movements, food justice and sovereignty, connecting food to culture, and yoga/mindfulness. She is organizing the pilot class this fall with intentions to replicate in the future.

Committee member term expirations

Catherine Zietse shared that committee member terms will expire at the end of this year. Members will need to complete and submit a Personal Information Form to the Clerk's Office at getinvolved@grcity.us as soon as possible to be considered for reappointment. Catherine will send out the form to all members.

Joan Huyser-Honig raised the GRPS seat of the committee that is still vacant. Connie Bohatch will reach out to John Helmholtz at GRPS to inquire about potential candidates. Lisa Oliver-King suggested reaching out to the principal or school coordinator at MLK Leadership Academy, who have been active participants in OKT programs there.

Future Agenda Items

Liz Visser followed up with Justin Burdine from Cornerstone University regarding the results of his insect survey. He anticipates having results available spring 2021 and would like to share with committee.

Joan Huyser-Honig inquired about staffing and capacity of the Planning Department as it relates to the committee recommendations previously submitted. Connie Bohatch replied that the department is currently very focused on cannabis policies and is hiring a Cannabis Manager that should free up other staff. Catherine Zietse suggested the committee to be included in community engagement efforts for the City master plan update. Connie Bohatch will invite Planning Director Kristin Turkleson to attend the November committee meeting.

Wende Randall shared that the League of Women Voters and several community organizations are working to inform public on what to expect on the ballot this November. They are hosting an information session on Zoom and Facebook Live, September 14th at 5:30 pm. The October information session will have Spanish translation.

Meeting adjourned at 6:24 p.m.

Next Meeting – TBD

The November committee meeting needs to be rescheduled due to federal holiday of Veterans Day. Catherine Zietse has sent a calendar poll to determine date and time.

**URBAN AGRICULTURE COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES
Thursday November 05, 2020
Webex**

Call to Order - Meeting was called to order at 5:37 p.m.

Roll Call

Present: Joan Huyser-Honig, Liz Visser, Jill Myer, Connie Bohatch, Steve Krogman, Dave Zimmerman,
Absent: Rori Jean Trench, Crystal Tunstall, Alita Kelly, Tema (Ayanfe) Jamison, Lisa Oliver-King, **Other:**
Kristin Turkelson and Erik Powers (City Planning Department); Catherine Zietse (City staff liaison)

Approval of Agenda

Motion made by Connie Bohatch, supported by Liz Visser, to approve the November 5 agenda as presented. Carries unanimously.

Approval of Minutes

Motion made by Liz Visser, supported by Joan Huyser-Honig, to approve the September minutes with edits from Connie Bohatch clarifying Planning Department capacity. Carries unanimously.

Public Comments - None.

Round Robin Announcements

- Steve Krogman – The Parks Department is gearing up for winter operations, including strategizing on how to keep more parks plowed in anticipation of higher visitation.
- Connie Bohatch – Has been coordinating with John Helmholtz to find a GRPS representative for the committee. Two teachers are interested in serving - Renee Howard, who currently teaches at Brookside Elementary but helped to establish the school garden at Congress Elementary, and Michelle Holiday, who teaches at Grand Rapids Montessori and started the raised garden beds and composting/zero waste initiative. Both teachers are residents of the city. Connie will follow up with them to complete a Personal Information Form.
- Liz Visser – Operations at Blandford Farm are preparing for winter season.
- Dave Zimmerman – Habitat for Humanity has been strongly impacted by COVID-19 with both the construction projects and typical ability to utilize volunteers. Some apartments in the Plaza Roosevelt development will be ready for residents by Christmas. He has also finished the last of harvesting honey from his beehives.
- Joan Huyser-Honig – Met with Abigail Bruins from the Urban Forest Committee and will be collaborating on expanding the expand tree canopy in the Boston Square neighborhood. They also discussed the possibility of Friends of Grand Rapids Parks' summer Green Team supporting maintenance of community garden at Oakdale Park.
- Jill Myer – COVID-19 cases are dramatically on the rise in Kent County and the majority of her time is spent contact tracing.

New Business

2021 Committee Schedule

Catherine Zietse shared the draft 2021 meeting schedule, which continues the pattern of bi-monthly meetings on the second Wednesday of the month at 5:30 p.m. Meetings will continue to be held virtually until further notice.

Motion made by Steve Krogman, supported by Liz Visser, to approve the 2021 meeting schedule as presented. Carries unanimously.

Updates from the City Planning Department

Planning Director Kristin Turkelson shared her appreciation for the committee's patience as other work has prevented the Department from being able to respond to the committee's recommendations. She shared that she took the role of Managing Planning Director when the former planning director resigned late last summer and while she has since accepted the job as Planning Director, the assistant planning director position has remained vacant. That position is now being filled. Major issues of cannabis policy and the impact of COVID-19 on development took more time and resources than originally anticipated. The Planning Department is now in final interviews of hiring a Cannabis Manager position that will support implementation of policies and vetting applications. They have also hired another Planner I position, Erik Powers, who will support zoning enforcement, housing compliance, and also the work of this committee. Kristin is optimistic that the time is right to move forward with reviewing and implementing committee recommendations.

Erik Powers introduced himself and said he is look forward to working with the committee.

Joan Huyser-Honig inquired which topic of committee recommendations might be able to be implemented first. Kristen Turkelson responded that backyard chickens has good potential for revisions and increased flexibility now that the current ordinance has been in place for a couple years with very few complaints received. Often when the City introduces a new policy there are many initial concerns that result in a conservative policy that can later be adjusted and updated once tested.

Joan Huyser-Honig asked why the permit fees in Grand Rapids costs significantly more than in other cities. The annual fee increased from \$52 to \$54 since committee recommendations were submitted in October 2019. Kristin Turkelson responded she was not able to speak directly to the fee amount as that is a decision made by City Commission; however, she can share that the Planning Department does not make money on permit fees because of the internal work necessary to review permits. Other cities may subsidize the permit fees or have different processes that require less steps in the review process. Also, City fees increase slightly every year to match inflation. Kristin stated the committee's recommendation to make backyard chicken permits last for three years has merit and would help with cost reduction overall.

The next steps for implementing the recommendations of this body would be for the Planning Department to review all recommendations before beginning policy discussions with City Commission. An internal review of the previously submitted recommendations needs to occur first to ensure recommendations can be implemented as the committee intended and also to determine which recommendations have land use implications. Kristin Turkelson suggested bringing forward all recommendations at one time and creating a schedule where Commission and the Urban Ag. Committee can track individual policy initiatives, as some might advance quicker than others.

Connie Bohatch supported this approach, and shared that although recommendations for policy changes are brought forward in one package, they can be implemented in piecemeal. For example, the

City Code Compliance has concerns and many opinions related to backyard animals, so this will take longer to implement and reach an agreement. Kristin Turkelson agreed, and offered that backyard chickens, bees, and edible landscaping would be more easily updated. Erik Powers also agreed and shared that from his code enforcement background, backyard livestock has created many issues with neighbors, but he has seen many chicken enclosures that were viable for neighborhoods. He would like to become more familiar with the details of committee recommendations before commenting on specifics. Kristen Turkelson shared her intentions that Erik attend Urban Agriculture Committee meetings regularly to be able to facilitate bringing their recommendations to City Commission.

Connie Bohatch suggested the committee add the accessory structures research and recommendations to the current recommendations document and resend to the Planning Department for review before embarking on additional research. Erik Powers supported this approach and stated he would like to review the work done to date before requesting additional information or research. Catherine Zietse will share relevant committee materials with him.

Old Business

Edible Landscape Mapping Project

Catherine Zietse shared that she and Lisa Oliver-King shared the work of the committee with a Master of Public Health class and although it was not directly related to the mapping project, it was well received and resulted in good discussion. Joan Huyser-Honig and Catherine Zietse presented the mapping project to two sections of Crystal Tunstall's Environmental Studies class, who was assigned a small portion of the city to report on.

Joan Huyser-Honig asked the committee if there were other ideas for other schools or partners to get involved in the project. Catherine Zietse will follow up with Brianne Robach at United Way on a past request.

Connie Bohatch suggested that the GRPS committee representative would likely have good ideas for how to integrate with projects in the district, and also there might be potential for the City to employ youth to carry out the project through the Grow 1000 program. Joan Huyser-Honig will follow up with Connie to share project summary and scope of work.

Liz Visser shared that she has connected with another professor at Grand Valley State University who was interested in sustainable agriculture at Blandford and Grand Rapids in general. He is interested in attending a future meeting.

Committee Communication and Outreach

With community interest in home gardening, CSAs, and urban agriculture dramatically increasing this summer in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, the committee revisited communication and outreach efforts. If there was a specific project the committee wanted to develop over the winter, we could publish and push out in time for the 2021 growing season.

Joan Huyser-Honig inquired if there were plans for Neighborhood Summit in 2021. Connie Bohatch was unsure but promised to follow up as details were released. Jill Myer reiterated that 2020 Neighborhood Summit was great opportunity and successful engagement, but any in-person engagement activities might need to wait until summer. Joan agreed that after Summit there was good momentum with residents, and the committee should continue to discuss this topic.

Liz Visser suggested creating an infographic of how people can garden within City ordinance, as she has seen good examples from other cities in her research. Joan Huyser-Honig suggested we specifically clarify what can be planted in front yards and harvested on public property.

Meeting adjourned at 6:38 p.m.

Next Meeting – January 13, 2021 5:30 p.m.