

URBAN AGRICULTURE COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES

January 10, 2018

Call to Order

Meeting was called to order at 6:00 p.m.

Roll Call

Present: Connie Bohatch, Amy DeVrou, Levi Gardner, Rachel Hood, Ryan Huppert, Joan Huyser-Honig, Alita Kelly, Jason Meyer, Jill Myer, David Zimmerman

Absent: Steve Krogman

Others: Dotti Clune, Catherine Zietse (City staff)

Approval of Agenda

Jason Meyer moved and it was seconded to approve the agenda as presented. Motion carried unanimously.

Approval of Minutes

Ryan Huppert moved and it was seconded to approve the agenda as presented. Motion carried unanimously.

Guest Presentation

Urban Forestry Committee - Strategies and Best Practices

Dotti Clune, previous chair and current member of the Urban Forest Committee, shared some of the processes and outcomes since the start of their committee's work in 2008. In addition to an Emerald Ash Borer response plan, they have produced three main planning products - Urban Forest Plan, Zoning Ordinance revisions, and a Tree Ordinance revision. Rather than regulation and enforcement, their committee took more of an educational approach to code revisions and planning efforts, and was intentional to use an educational tone in new ordinance language.

In addition to community education, they had continuous learning opportunities internally with their committee and also with City Commission. A Commissioner liaison was helpful for their committee in representation in other City business and to provide different expertise. Dotti also advised taking advantage of expertise found within the community.

The Urban Forestry Committee took care to fully understand issues and barriers before devising solutions. One outcome of this was the 40% urban canopy goal, which became a rallying point for the community. They also worked very closely with the Planning Department to strategically match zoning ordinance revisions with tree canopy deficits.

Comments from Public

A letter from resident Peggy Vranish was distributed to committee members. Ms. Vranish wishes to start a small CSA on her residential property for supplemental income, however she is prohibited from doing so by current residential zoning and the home occupation ordinance. Levi Gardner expressed that this situation should be addressed with the committee's future work of policy review, and entrepreneurial opportunities such as this should be available to residents. He would personally follow up with Ms. Vranish on behalf of the committee and invite her to attend a future meeting. Connie Bohatch volunteered to follow up with the Planning Department for further clarification on the home occupation ordinance.

New Business

Timeline and Prioritization of Goals

After review, committee goals were reorganized as follows:

- (1) Complete a comprehensive review of current city ordinances related to urban agriculture and develop recommendations
- (2) Commit to intentional and meaningful public engagement for public review of proposed ordinance changes
- (3) Conduct a baseline study to establish indicators and track growth of urban agriculture activities in Grand Rapids
- (4) Create and implement communication plan to share baseline findings and ordinance revisions with community.

Future Task Force:

- (5) Advocate for more edible plants to be incorporated into the landscaping of public land

Old Business

Committee Vacancies

Rori Weston, Executive Director of Fulton Street Farmers Market, will be recommended to fill the mayoral appointment for a member representing a farmers market.

After review, the committee chairs recommended three applicants to the Committee on Appointments for consideration of the general member vacancy.

Information Item

The 2018 meeting schedule was distributed. Connie Bohatch requested the committee consider various locations for meetings, particularly in summer months.

Agenda Items for Next Meeting

Committee members discussed potential topics for future meetings, including a review of Levi Gardner's 2015 Grand Rapids Ordinance report, guest presentations from Assistant Planning Supervisor Kristin Turkelson, and Don Lam, who helped pass beekeeping ordinances in Holland and Grand Haven.

Meeting adjourned at 7:25 p.m.

**URBAN AGRICULTURE COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES
MARCH 14, 2018**

Call to Order

Meeting was called to order at 6:05 p.m.

Roll Call

Present: Connie Bohatch, Amy DeVrou, Levi Gardner, Rachel Hood, Joan Husyer-Honig, Alita Kelly, Steve Krogman, Jill Myer, Dave Zimmerman

Absent: Ryan Huppert, Jason Meyer

Others: Catherine Zietse (City Staff)

Approval of Agenda

Motion made by Rachel Hood, supported Steve Krogman to approve the March 14, 2018 agenda as presented. Motion carried.

Approval of Minutes

Motion made by Joan Huyser-Honig, supported by Amy DeVrou, to approve the January 10 minutes as presented. Motion carried.

Comments from Public – None.

Levi Gardner gave an update regarding Ms. Vranish, who made a public comment at the January meeting. Levi was able to get in touch with her to discuss her situation further. Peggy sends her thanks to the committee for the work they will do.

Round Robin Announcements

A five minute round robin will be added to the regular committee agenda to share pertinent information to urban agriculture activities in our community.

- Levi – Urban Roots is hosting the Sharing Garden training on Friday April 13.
- Jill – At the Fulton St. Farmers Market, Joe (market operations) has taken a job with Michigan Farmers Market Association. There is a soup fundraiser event for the Fulton St. Farmers Market on Saturday March 24, 10 am – 1 pm.
- Steve – Michigan tourism group working to adopt flower beds downtown, expressed interest in urban gardens – potential future presentation.
- Amy – Grand Rapids Area Bee Keepers group is now officially a club; she will keep the bee keeping group updated with committee work.
- Joan & Alita are starting a small demonstration site with edible landscaping in the Amplify GR parking lot in the Boston Square neighborhood.
- Dave – Don Lam (local bee keeper who worked on policy changes in Holland and Grand Haven) is available to come to the July meeting.
- Alita announced she will be leaving the committee as she was accepted into the University of Michigan and will begin classes in the fall.

New Business: Policy Review

Current Ordinances

Levi Gardner & Catherine Zietse met with Planning Supervisor Kristin Turkelson on March 7 to get insight into the process of ordinance changes. New Planning staff has potential to be a liaison to the committee. Kristin's recommendation was to create draft recommendations as a committee, then have a number of community feedback opportunities. The committee should start having conversations with the public now so they realize the process has begun. Kristin Turkelson recommended a comprehensive approach rather than incremental changes. Connie Bohatch agreed, because even if the process takes longer, the final product will be much easier for citizens to understand.

Levi Gardner gave the committee an overview of his 2015 report, "Urban Agriculture in the City of Grand Rapids." Both the Green Grand Rapids Plan (2011) and the American Planning Association provided strong justification for the creation of this committee. Connie Bohatch added that Green Grand Rapids laid out the framework that committees and community organizations are the ones driving the work (rather than just the City). Grand Rapids is behind compared to other cities our size have passed comprehensive urban agriculture ordinances in the last decade, despite much urban agriculture work already underway with about 30 formal organizations, hundreds of individuals.

Levi walked through current ordinances, located in 6 different chapters of the Grand Rapids code. Not included are codes related to urban farms (only community gardens), school gardens, aquaponics, fruit trees in greenways, farm stands/residential commerce, and cottage food laws.

Discussion

Levi Gardner opened the table to discussion. Rachel Hood clarified that the committee will be recommending amendments to existing code as well as proposing new language. The committee can propose the ideal language, then deliver to city staff in Planning and the Attorney's office for negotiation. There is also potential for coordination with the upcoming City Master Plan in 2020.

Levi Gardner suggested the possibility of dedicating upcoming committee meetings as working time instead of creating subcommittees. Rachel stated that with limited meeting time, there should be outside work for committee between standing committee meetings.

Rachel Hood suggested a call out to the community for policy suggestions, sharing that in her time at WMEAC residents would often provide her with examples of other codes from around the country. Joan Huyser-Honig asked if codes are copyrighted. Connie Bohatch answered City property maintenance codes are, but municipal code is not. Dave Zimmerman said the Holland and Grand Haven bee ordinances are direct copies of Madison, WI.

Levi summarized the discussion by proposing a process:

1. Engage invested residents and local organizations for desired or alternative codes
2. Internal research by the committee for national best practices and compilation of desired policy language
3. Solicit more formal and meaningful community engagement after the committee has solid draft recommendations

The committee discussed expectations and timeline for accomplishing the workload. Smaller working groups were created to begin the work and report out at the May meeting.

Best practices working group: Alita Kelly, Joan Huyser-Honig, and Amy DeVrou

Community Engagement working group: Rachel Hood, Levi Gardner, and Jill Myer
Connie Bohatch will assist in navigating the City process.

Old Business

Summer Meeting Locations

The committee discussed alternative meeting locations where the outside at local community farms and other urban ag-related organizations.

- May 9, Blandford farm or Nature Center (Ward 1)
- July 12, New City Farm (Ward 2)
 - Note: This meeting date would be moved from Wednesday July 11 to Thursday the 12th to coincide with open pizza/café hours at the farm.
- September 12, Urban Roots (Ward 3)

Once host organizations have confirmed the availability of these dates, Levi will ask committee for a motion to change the meeting schedule via email. Catherine will follow up with Clerk's office to post new meeting schedule.

Agenda Items for next meeting (May 9, 2018):

- Report outs from working groups
- Revisit committee goals – still working on other things as a committee
- Representative from the meeting site to share current work

Joan Husyer-Honig inquired about committee vacancies. Catherine Zietse responded that Rori Weston has been accepted and will hopefully be officially joining the committee at the next meeting. The remaining vacancy was passed onto the Committee of Appointments for consideration, who are continuing to seek other applicants as well.

Jill Meyer shared that Commissioner Kurt Reppart is willing to act as a liaison for the committee.

Meeting adjourned at 7:16 pm

**URBAN AGRICULTURE COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES
May 9, 2018**

Call to Order

Meeting was called to order at 6:05 p.m.

Roll Call

Present: Connie Bohatch, Levi Gardner, Rachel Hood, Alita Kelly, Steve Krogman, Jason Meyer, Jill Myer, Rori Weston

Absent: Amy DeVrou, Ryan Huppert, Dave Zimmerman

Others: Emma Garcia & Wende Randall (Kent County Food Policy Council), Landon Bartley & Catherine Zietse (City Staff)

Approval of Agenda

Motion made by Jason Meyer, supported by Jill Myer, to approve the May 9 agenda as presented. Motion carried.

Approval of Minutes

Motion made by Steve Krogman, supported by Joan Huyser-Honing, to approve the March 14, 2018 minutes as presented. Motion carried.

Comments from Public

A letter from resident Luke Malski was presented to the committee. Mr. Malski built a small greenhouse on his residential property, which is welcomed in the neighborhood but is in violation of code. After conversations with Code Compliance and the Planning Department, Mr. Malski took down the greenhouse last weekend and converted it to a pergola.

Landon Bartley, senior planner with the City, explained the issue with the accessory structure ordinance. Within traditional neighborhood zoning, accessory structures cannot be built in front of the house. The problem is that the current code doesn't distinguish between the types of accessory structures (garage vs greenhouse). In this specific instance, Luke's property has two front yards on his corner lot. Applying for a variance was possible, but expensive because it requires a public hearing. City planners were also concerned that Mr. Malski would not be granted the variance if he applied because other areas on his property would allow an accessory structure (although it would be too shady for a greenhouse). Converting the greenhouse to a pergola was the compromise reached.

Rachel Hood asked if there is a way to do a seasonal agreement, and if the transparent materials of greenhouse siding allows for another interpretation. Landon replied that the Planning Department has to assume that all structures are permanent. Ordinance language has to be crafted for the majority of the cases instead of special cases (e.g. a car port).

Round Robin Announcements

Jason Meyer shared a bit about agricultural and educational activities at the Blandford farm, which has 10 acres of farmland with pigs, chickens, goats and sheep, as well as 2.5 acres of cultivated land for farmers market and CSA and the bicentennial barn. This summer Blandford's farm camp and nature camp will be expanded, and the farm also has multiple events (concerts, fundraisers) throughout the year that bring the public to experience the farm. Neighbors frequently visit and explore as well.

No other announcements.

New Business

Kent County Food Policy Council

Emma Garcia and Wende Randall shared the background and mission of the Kent County Food Policy Council. They are here to begin the conversation to align efforts with the committee and support each other's work. Currently they are working under the formation team, however the council will have 16 seats spanning many sectors. It is positioned within the Essential Needs Task Force. They hope to begin county-wide engagement this summer and fall with a broad survey and focus groups.

Joan Huyser-Honig asked for clarification on the council's incorporation of food justice initiatives. Wende explained the council is anticipating specific needs to come out of the community engagement process. Broad categories of focus for the council were created to capture all topics that might come up in the community, rather than basing agenda solely on Good Food Charter.

Levi Gardner asked about communication strategies between the committees. Wende replied that there has been some crossover already with Jill Meyer's contributions to the formation team, however more will have to be determined to establish a proactive and open process. Potential strategies could be having consent agenda items or joint meetings.

Old Business

Summer meeting schedule

Call for motion to change the July meeting to Thursday July 12 at New City Farm and the September 12 meeting location to Urban Roots as discussed at the previous meeting. Motion moved by Connie Bohatch, supported by Jill Meyer. Motion carries.

Community outreach working group

Catherine Zietse shared a summary of responses from the policy feedback survey. To date, there have been 54 responses with relatively equal distribution among wards. The survey is available on the committee's webpage at grandrapidsmi.gov and has been distributed to community organizations and individuals recommended from the committee survey (July 2017) as well as through committee members' personal networks. Levi Gardner recommended the survey remain open until June 1. Committee members should share with their networks to gather additional responses.

The committee discussed potential processes for future community engagement, which to some extent will be determined by what the recommendations are. Regardless, final recommendations will be required to go to City Commission, which will require public hearing. Landon Bartley suggested the committee complete one large engagement period, then take out the specific pieces that are needed to the Planning Commission before the comprehensive package goes before Commission.

Policy and best practices working group

Alita Kelly, Joan Huyser-Honig, and Amy DeVrou have created a working document to pull together policy language and best practices from other cities. They have organized ordinances into 12-16 main topics, with examples taken mostly from Austin Portland, Seattle, & Chicago.

Joan observed that while many cities adopt a food action plan, it is hard to find it applied in the city code. Alita also shared that in Maine, 20 cities have implemented a food sovereignty ordinance and have not experienced any issues. Levi Gardner proposed the working committee rank ordinances by what is closest to Grand Rapids' current language.

Committee goals

The committee is making progress on the first goal to complete a comprehensive review of current city ordinance and develop recommendations. Discussion of other goals focused on community engagement. Levi Gardner was curious if separate community outreach initiatives would duplicate efforts with the City's formal process. Connie Bohatch advised that it is better to go out and educate the community ahead of time, to answer questions and distill fear before getting in front of City commission. It is also a great opportunity for community education of what the city currently allows and what other cities allow in order to determine our community's tolerance.

Rachel Hood added that these are policy topics that need discussion, and additional education and engagement also creates energy to implement solutions. The committee could easily facilitate a process or event that allows people to filter through various topics fairly quickly. Rachel, Levi, and Catherine will meet to map out some potential engagement strategies before the July meeting.

Agenda items for next meeting – Thursday, July 12, 2018

- Host organization announcements - New City Farm, Lance Kraai
- Don Lam – West Michigan bee ordinances
- Committee vacancies
- Community engagement process, cont.

Adjournment

Meeting adjourned at 7:23 p.m.

**URBAN AGRICULTURE COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES
Thursday July 12, 2018**

Call to Order

Meeting was called to order at 6:08 p.m.

Roll Call and Introductions

Present: Connie Bohatch, Amy DeVrou, Levi Gardner, Joan Husyer-Honig Eleanor Moreno, Jill Myer, Rori Weston, Lisa Oliver-King

Absent: Ryan Huppert, Steve Krogman, Jason Myer, Dave Zimmerman, Rachel Hood

Other: Sarah Behmlander (City Sustainability Office intern), Lance Kraai (New City Farm), Austin Roelofs (Kids Food Basket), Wende Randall (Kent County Essential Needs Task Force), Catherine Zietse (city staff)

Approval of Agenda

Scheduled speaker Don Lam was unavailable for tonight's meeting. Motion made by Jill Myer, supported by Rori Weston, to approve agenda without guest speaker agenda item. Motion carried.

Approval of Minutes

Motion made by Joan Huyser-Honig, supported by Jill Myer, to approve the May 8, 2018 minutes as presented. Motion carried.

Public Comments

Austin Roelofs from Kids Food Basket introduced himself and his organization to the committee. Kids Food Basket is at the end of a capital campaign to develop a new facility at Leonard and Plymouth, with 5 acres for an operations building for sack suppers and 9 acres of historic farm to grow fresh food for lunches. This is their second growing season. He is attending to understand more about the committee business and goals.

Committee Round Robin Announcements

Host organization announcements

Lance Kraai, Farm Director at New City Urban Farm, shared about the mission and activities on the farm. The farm is in its 7th growing season & is partnered with New City Neighbors to run youth programming for kids in elementary through high school. Middle school staff run a summer bakery program out of the church's commercial kitchen, and out of this program grew a farm program for high school students and the café which is open in the summer. The farm is run as social enterprise with 240 families participating in the year-round. Additionally, EBT & double up food bucks can be used at the farm stand and the farm has a partnership with Access Food Pantry.

The farm is in a good location, but is residentially zoned so they have run into some issues with current ordinances. They are limited in greenhouse space, and have run into issues with hoopouses and greenhouses, which match the legal descriptions of a carport. Limitations on other season extension structures has held them back. Impending fear of neighbor complaints. Lance says he would encourage revised ordinances to have different requirements for fees or specs based on size, so that small farmers could construct their own structures. Levi Gardner

agreed, but added that it would be helpful to also have a minimal material requirement, such as galvanized steel for cat tunnels rather than PVC pipes.

Other committee announcements

- The Kent County Food Policy Council was at New City that evening to engage community members in conversations and dot polling. Their group is looking for other community events to be part of this summer, and will begin focused work sessions in the fall to take input into strategies (Wende Randall).
- Renovations at Coit Park include fruit trees – Montmorency Cherry, Honey Crip, Braeburn, and Service Berry. Grand opening will be August 7 (Catherine Zietse).
- Upcoming classes and other events at Fulton St. Farmers Market for National Farmers Market Week (Rori Weston).
- Eleanor Moreno is recording stories from Kent County, and would love to connect with any committee members.
- Joan Huyser-Honig is involved with a new edible garden in Boston Square business district.
- Urban Roots is expanding their community market with support from Spectrum Health & Amway to include shelved items and fresh food from regional vendors. The market will have a tiered pricing structure. Reopening will be September 6 from 12-2 pm. Urban Roots will also be hosting another 5-course Supper Club on Wed. September 18th (Levi Gardner).

Old Business

Report out & discussion - Community Outreach working group

The initial policy survey received a total of 84 responses, which were broken down into emergent themes of composting, education, bees/chickens/livestock, efficient land use, structures, and tax incentives. Levi Gardner added that most responses seemed to be from “the choir”, thus the committee will need to do due diligence to reach others in upcoming engagement efforts.

Levi Gardner shared a draft template for content that shows current Grand Rapids ordinances and examples of other ordinances from around the country. With the proposed timeline, the committee has the next two months to plan and complete an 80% draft of proposed ordinance language before engagement begins. Eleanor Moreno asked if one event per ward was enough, to which Levi responded that the number of events will be based on staff time and committee dedication. Eleanor also suggested leveraging the engagement work that will be done by the Kent County Food Policy Council.

Connie Bohatch suggested to show pictures of design elements or property layouts for different ordinance options, pointing back to the need for education alongside engagement. The committee should be wary of planning fatigue, with Housing NOW! engagement sessions beginning in the near future. In response to a question, she indicated ordinances typically take effect 30 days after adoption.

Levi Gardner clarified that the target deadline of September 15 for an 80% draft was for finding proposed language based off of national examples and best practices. The city attorney's office will assist in creating new language.

Report out & discussion - Policy/Best Practices working group

An updated document of all ordinances and best practices will be sent through email.

Amy DeVrou shared best practices of bee keeping ordinances, which typically include a certain distance away from houses, and a requirement of a water source. Maintenance language is also included. Many ordinances have similar language to each other, such as 1 or 2 hives per "x" square feet, with 5-10 ft from lot lines with flyaway barrier. The current requirements in Grand Rapids are that hives need to be 100 inside property line and also 50 from buildings, and there are very few properties where this works. Language on permitting varies – for instance in Holland, a permit is required and neighbors are notified when the permit is submitted.

Jill Myer posed a question to the committee about the place of education in the policy process. The committee discussed various ways to communicate its vision and purpose with the community, especially with local food organizations.

Agenda Items for Next Meeting – Wednesday, September 12, 2018 @ Urban Roots

- Working session – policy work plan and timeline
- Follow up with Don Lam for future meeting (West Michigan bee ordinances)

Adjournment

Meeting was adjourned at 7:32 pm

**URBAN AGRICULTURE COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES
Wednesday September 12, 2018**

Call to Order

Meeting was called to order at 6:02 p.m.

Roll Call and Introductions

Present: Levi Gardner, Joan Huyser-Honig, Jason Meyer, Eleanor Moreno, Lisa Oliver-King, Rori Weston, Dave Zimmerman

Absent: Connie Bohatch, Rachel Hood, Steve Krogman, Jill Myer

Other: Kristin Turkelson (Assistant Planning Director), Wende Randall (Kent County Essential Needs Task Force/Food Policy Council), Liz Visser (Blandford Nature Center), Zenobia Taylor-Weiss (Heartside Fresh Food access group), Catherine Zietse (city staff)

Approval of Agenda

Motion made by Rori Weston, supported by Lisa Oliver-King, to approve agenda as presented. Motion carried.

Approval of Minutes

Motion made by Jason Meyer, supported by Dave Zimmerman, to approve the July 12, 2018 minutes as presented. Motion carried.

Public Comments

Zenobia Taylor-Weiss shared that the Heartside Fresh Food Access work group has just formed as one of seven work groups coming out of the Heartside Quality of Life study. They would be interested to be involved with community outreach related to this committee.

Committee Round Robin Announcements

Host organization announcements

Levi Gardner shared that Urban Roots is a ¾ acre community farm, market, and education center. A new community market opened last week with bulk items and produce from local farms. They accept a variety of assistance and are piloting different price points based on what customers are able to pay. Urban Roots hosts many groups for service learning tours and workshops. Other programming includes a neighborhood composting program collecting and mobile classroom which goes to 20 gardens throughout the city.

Other committee announcements

- The Jeans & Jewels Gala at Blandford is 9/20. Tickets are still available (Jason).
- Eleanor just returned from a trip to Milwaukee, and encouraged everyone to tour Growing Power (urban agriculture organization).
- Our Kitchen Table's Southeast Farmers Market continues to run Saturdays 11:00 am – 4:00 pm (open through November). (Lisa)
- The Habitat for Humanity Gala this week, will be unveiling Bright Futures program (Dave).
- The next Urban Roots Supper Club is Wednesday, September 19 (Levi).
- The Kent County Food Policy Council is summarizing community engagement results of views on good food. From this they will prioritize 6 policy priority areas to form focus

groups. By the end of fall they hope to have seated members and recommendations for policy agenda (Wende).

- Kids Food Basket survey coming this month (Eleanor).

Old Business

Committee Reappointment Process

Amy DeVrou and Ryan Huppert have resigned from the committee, creating available positions for one resident and one Grand Rapids Public Schools representative. Jason Meyer will be stepping down as well, and is recommending Liz Visser, the Blandford Farm Manager, for his replacement.

Committee members need to complete an updated Personal Information Form for the Clerk's Office as soon as possible to be considered for reappointment in January 2019.

Lisa Oliver-King inquired to the process and criteria for selecting the next GRPS representative, and suggested the new principal at MLK Leadership Academy would be a good fit. Catherine Zietse replied that the official criteria specifies that the position representing GRPS should have a demonstrated interest or expertise in urban agriculture issues.

Report out & discussion - Policy/Best Practices working group

Joan Huyser-Honig shared the Backyard Chicken Policies and Best Practices Summary document with the committee, which demonstrates that Grand Rapids is more restrictive of raising chickens than other cities. Most cities that have more permissive rules and no fees also have Food Policy councils that educate residents.

Lisa asked if the cities that did not require a fee still required a permit, and also if there were accompanying classes alongside permit requirements. Joan replied that there were multiple cities where no permit is required at all, and educational opportunities available depended on the city. Austin, for example, has a rebate program for chicken coops if residents attend a class.

Levi raised importance of city programs to support education, sharing examples from the "City Food Policy and Programs" report of how 12 cities and partner organizations support food systems work. Catherine will send the report to the committee for further reading.

Lisa and Dave volunteered to join Joan on the subcommittee to generate 10-12 additional topic summaries using Joan's summary document as a template (Joan has already begun documents for animal keeping and edible landscaping). Levi asked to end the summary sheets with a proposed idea for Grand Rapids ordinance.

Kristin Turkelson shared that the Planning Department will pull the ordinance language from cities listed in the summaries, and will be developing the specific language for new ordinances in Grand Rapids.

Report out & discussion - Community Outreach working group

Levi walked the committee through the Engagement Plan document, which is the fall portion of the larger timeline that was given in July. After meeting with the Planning Department, it was

determined to focus less on asking the public for input on specific ordinance language (such as distance setbacks or exact structure heights), and instead focus more on community vision and goals. The City will be scheduling five to six 90-minute meetings at varying times and varying locations in October and November. At least one of the meeting locations will have translation or be held in Spanish.

Lisa asked to clarify the overall purpose of these engagement meetings, to which Levi replied it is to determine common goals and priorities that will inform ordinance updates. Liz Visser clarified if committee members will be responsible for facilitating. Levi responded that committee members should expect to attend 1-2 meetings and assist in facilitating the small group discussions. City staff will also be present, depending on availability. A more detailed facilitation process and template will be coming.

Wendy shared that ENFT has funding available for some engagement needs, such as translation and printing. Kristin Turkelson suggested to look at the GRCC preschool program to assist with free childcare.

Joan suggested that visuals would be helpful, such as pictures from other cities that have more urban agriculture opportunities. Lisa agreed, and added that it would also be helpful to include images of what urban agriculture currently looks like in Grand Rapids. Kristin suggested the committee utilize Mentimeter or another interactive tool to get immediate feedback on visuals (e.g. “Do you prefer urban agriculture to look like image A or image B?”).

Jason Meyer suggested the opening vision question be rephrased to, “What do you hope urban agriculture would accomplish in the community?”

Eleanor expressed concern that the language used was very academic and high level, and wouldn’t necessary translate well into Spanish. Definitions and explanations should be easier to understand. Lisa agreed, and noted that particularly the definition of what urban agriculture is should be simplified.

The bulk of the discussion will be focused around trade-off scenarios. The intention is to create good discussion from residents, from which we can tease out values and priorities. Kristin Turkelson walked the committee through situations in the zoning considerations document. She explained that in many cases it is hard to legally differentiate between requirements for urban ag. uses and other uses. For example:

- If residents are okay with a greenhouse, then they have to be okay with the “Home Depot shed” (can only restrict height, size, setback, etc. of accessory structures)
- If business at your home is dependent on coming and going, that’s not okay (roadside stands, jewelry, salons) makes it more difficult from a legal stance to say the produce is okay but jewelry isn’t
- A business run out of a private residence is not allowed if it is dependent on traffic coming and going (such as jewelry shops, salons, or roadside stands). It is difficult from a legal stance to say that produce is okay to sell from your home but jewelry is not.

In summary, Levi confirmed that committee members would be willing to attend at least one public engagement session on behalf of the committee. Feedback will be needed on additional tradeoff scenarios and visual aids that will be developed.

Eleanor asked how the public meetings will be promoted. The meetings will be advertised through the same process of other public meetings, online, on social media, press release, and advertised through community organizations.

Adjournment

Meeting was adjourned at 7:38 pm

Next Meeting – Wednesday, November 14, 2018 @ City Hall (Rm 601)

**URBAN AGRICULTURE COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES
Wednesday November 14, 2018**

Call to Order

Meeting was called to order at 6:05 p.m.

Roll Call

Present: Levi Gardner, Liz Visser, Rori Weston, Jill Myer, Eleanor Moreno, Lisa Oliver-King, Connie Bohatch

Absent: Joan Huyser-Honig, Steve Krogman, Dave Zimmerman, Rachel Hood

Other: Wende Randall (Kent County Essential Needs Task Force), Anna Schlutt (area college student), Gordie Moeller (resident), Kristin Turkelson (City staff, conference call), Catherine Zietse (City staff)

Approval of Agenda

Motion made by Jill Myer, supported by Rori Weston, to approve agenda as presented. Motion carried.

Approval of Minutes

Motion by Jill Myer, supported by Eleanor Moreno, to approve September 12 meeting minutes. Motion carried.

Public Comments

Wende Randall offered ENFT support for outreach costs. Gordie Moeller introduced himself as a resident interested in urban agriculture and food security issues. Anna Schlutt introduced herself as an Aquinas student writing an article on urban agriculture.

Round Robin Announcements

- Blandford winter CSA will soon be starting, available Fulton Street Farmers Market. Blandford is working to provide their produce to the YMCA Veggie Van in the future (Liz Visser).
- Fulton Street Farmers Market will have their winter market open January – April. They will also be starting up a monthly giving fundraiser program (Rori Weston).
- Our Kitchen Table will be extending their season at a school garden with low tunnel (Lisa Oliver-King).
- Multiple community partners are collaborating for a health needs gap assessment (Kids Food Basket, ENFT, Calvin College Center for Social Research, Access West Michigan). With 650 surveys received and 9 listening sessions scheduled, they are about halfway through the process (Eleanor Moreno).
- Urban Roots will be expanding bike composting program, also developing partnership with the YMCA for food vouchers at the Urban Roots market (Levi Gardner).
- Gordie Moeller shared he will be helping a winter CSA and food pantry pilot project with fitness options through the Michigan Fitness Foundation. Additionally, Good Greens is a helpful resource for online webinars and grant opportunities (nutrition, health, and education).
- There continues to be policy discussions at the City about marihuana, and the recent passage of recreational use could affect the work of the committee (Connie Bohatch)

Adopt 2019 Meeting Schedule

Motion made by Rori Weston, supported by Liz Visser, to adopt the 2019 meeting schedule with following changes to summer meeting locations: May meeting at Fulton Street Farmers Market, July

meeting at Our Kitchen Table/Garfield Park Neighborhood Association, and September meeting in the Roosevelt Park neighborhood (specific location TBD). Motion carried.

Community Engagement Debrief

The committee had an open discussion about the five engagement sessions in October. Rori Weston voiced concern about low turnout to engagement sessions and wondered if more engagement was needed. Eleanor Moreno shared there was good engagement at the Fulton St. Farmers market, and Liz also thought people were very engaged at the session she attended. There was consensus overall that the input received was mostly from “the choir,” and Connie Bohatch indicated that the committee will likely hear feedback from more residents once there is draft ordinance language, because people will have a better understanding of what is being proposed and provide better input when there are concrete examples about how zoning and policies will affect them. The goals and input received from residents thus far is still an important step to develop policy. Lisa Oliver-King hoped there will be opportunities to add to input received as the process continues.

Catherine Zietse walked the committee through the summary document of input received, which was broken down by question and themes. There was substantial conversation at many engagement sessions about what is/is not currently allowed, and many residents are confused. Levi Gardner added that it is also important that any education includes City staff members who will be interacting with these issues, citing frustration shared by a resident at a session. Kristin Turkelson suggested the survey results be separated into opportunities for policy, opportunities for education, and what is feasible and not feasible. Themes from engagement summary could be used to organize final policy recommendations.

Levi Gardner asked the committee if they felt like more engagement is needed. Liz Visser asked if the online survey is still active. Catherine responded that it is, but has not received any new submissions since October. There could be follow up surveys this spring on policy language or specific topics. Lisa Oliver-King and Eleanor Moreno thought they would be able to get more survey results, and agreed to share again. It was decided to move forward developing policy language recommendations while continuing to push out the survey.

Policy/best practices working group

The working group (Joan, Lisa, and Dave) will work to create 3-5 topic summary sheets of policy and best practices for the committee to review at the January meeting. Chickens and backyard animals have been developed thus far. Connie Bohatch suggested the working group start by selecting language from the “best practices” ordinances from other cities that accomplishes desired local outcomes. This language can be the starting point for the City’s Planning staff who will ultimately do the ordinance language drafting with the City Attorney’s office.

Agenda Items for Next Meeting

- Chair/vice chair elections,
- Update on committee vacancies
- Impact of future City marihuana policies on urban agriculture work (City Planning Department)

Meeting adjourned 7:15 p.m.