

URBAN AGRICULTURE COMMITTEE (UAC)
MEETING MINUTES
Wednesday September 11, 2024
Kids Food Basket (1300 Plymouth Ave NE)

Call to Order – Meeting called to order at 5:35pm.

Roll Call

Present: Carlos Calderon, Evvia Marshall, Kimberly Moore, Marshall Kilgore, Muriel Lutes, Robert Cloy

Absent: Connie Bohatch, Steve Krogman, Crystal Scott-Tunstall

Other: Liz Washington (Kids Food Basket – Public), Marueen Anderson (Ottawa Conservation District)

Approval of Agenda

Motion made by Carlos, supported by Dolli, to approve the September 11, 2024, agenda as presented. Motion carried.

Approval of Minutes

Motion made by Dolli, supported by Kimberly, to approve March 13, 2024, minutes as presented. Motion carried.

Public Comments

Round Robin Announcements

Committee Members

Robert: Coming up in the fall LGROW will be working with more schools. They have a grant for tree planting in the West Michigan region. There will be volunteer events coming up in late September and early October.

Marshall: WMEAC's 21st Annual Mayor cleanup will run through the 14th of this week

Carlos: Attended the National Urban Agriculture conference in Detroit where he was able to hear a lot of updates and connect with local, regional, state and national leaders.

- Kim asks if there is a list of all BIPOC farmers in Michigan. Carlos shares that there is sort of an informal list that is very vague, and the USDA's confidentiality policies prevent the list from being too in depth with personal information about farmers (location, contact, etc.). WMEAC is looking forward to funding from USDA to support initiatives for local farmers.

Evvia: No updates.

Kim: Kids Food Basket is in full swing. This year they piloted a GRPS summer school with youth from second through sixth grade who spent six weeks on the farm learning nutrition education. Last school year Kids Food Basket served 1.83 million meals, and this year they are projected to serve 1.85 million. Meals are served to roughly 60 schools with 10,000 evening meals on weekdays. During the out of school season meals go to local organizations. The organization requires roughly 250 volunteers to pack, prep, and deliver sack suppers to their serve area. Their second farm is fully operational this year.

Dolli: Has an idea to bring Adrienne Maree Brown, author of Emergent Strategy, to Grand Rapids through some kind of collaborative event/effort. There is potential from GVSU for this effort.

New Business

2025 Schedule Of Meetings (Discussion Item)

- Robert: Summer months usually are hosted outside of the Library, and the committee will need to vote on locations for next year during the November meeting. Robert asks if anyone on the committee is willing to host at their organization or have any ideas where else to host.
- Kim: Kids Food Basket can host in May.
- Robert: Brainstorming other locations such as Roosevelt Park community garden, Baxter Community Center – in the green house, New City Neighbors, Hillcrest community garden, Las Canchas.
- Robert: Will come back in November with a list to vote on.

Designated Seat Amendment (Discussion Item)

- Robert: He and Carlos met with Connie to try to make more of the seats that are hard to fill open to the public. Connie shared that it is possible to make this amendment recommended to change the number of seats. Right now, there are 13 seats and 4 vacancies. Next meeting the committee will discuss moving forward with these amendments to make things easier in the future for the committee to meet quorum.
- Kim: Agrees to move forward with this initiative.
- Liz Washinton (public – Kids Food Basket): Asks if the committee can get funding to pay members for their participation.
- Victoria (City Liaison): Shares that her inclination is that committee members are unable to get paid, but she will double check internally.
- Robert: Comments that it is hard to advocate for that with no budget.
- Kim: Asks if the committee can work with Parks to get a grant to fund some of the committee's efforts.
- Victoria (City Liaison): Shares that without a budget and goals, it will be hard to advocate for that, but she can ask what that process is.
- Carlos: Comments that an advisory committee, they should have more of a hand in advising the Park Department on how to interact with Urban Agriculture.
- Robert: Comments that having quorum will help to develop these ideas and establish a focus for the group.
- Evvia: Shares that they support amending the policy to make it easy for community members to apply because it was hard for them to initially get on the committee due to the committee's restrictive seat requirements.
- Dolli: Asks what is the committee's interaction with Community Gardens? How does Parks engage in these efforts and how do community members get involved if they want to have a community garden in a Park space?
- Victoria (City Liaison): Will work to get a list of community gardens in Park spaces for the group. She shares that Parks doesn't have a formal process to go through for community gardens in park spaces, but this is something that they are currently exploring as community members have been showing interest in community gardens at several design input sessions.

- Carlos: Comments that the committee should be updated on these types of efforts and should be active in developing a process for the Parks Department.
- Victoria (City Liaison): Says she will bring this up to the Park Capital Planning Project Manager and potentially share and update during next month's meeting.

Adjournment

Meeting adjourned at 6:45 p.m.

Next Meeting – November 13, 2024