

URBAN AGRICULTURE COMMITTEE (UAC)
MEETING MINUTES
Wednesday March 13, 2024

Call to Order – Meeting was called to order at 5:37.

Roll Call

Present: Mathew Channing, Dolli Lutes, Marshall Kilgore, Mathew Channing, Robert Cloy, Carlos Calderon, Steve Krogman, Kimberly Moore, Connie Bohatch

Absent: Crystal Tunstall, Evvia Marshall,

Other: Victoria Keenan (City Liaison – Parks and Recreation), Bella (public), Chris (public), Nate Willaims (City employee, public), Kiowa Richardson (public), Marine Anderson (public), Liz Washington (Kids Food Basket, public), Jessy Carl (public)

Approval of Agenda

Motion made by Mathew, supported by Carlos, to approve the March 13, 2024, agenda as presented. Motion carried.

Approval of Minutes

Motion made by Kimberly, supported by Mathew, to approve the January 10, 2024, minutes as presented. Motion carried.

Public Comments

- Bella: Heard about the committee and wanted to learn and listen from the group.
- Chris: Heard about the committee and wanted to learn and listen from the group.
- Nate Williams: Works in the City and is a resident interested in urban agriculture.
- Kiowa Richardson: Is not a resident but has a friend that wants to be a rabbit farmer and would like to see some revisions to the ordinances to include rabbits like the City does with bees and chickens. Kiowa asked if there is any way to do this and brought a petition that speaks to the impacts of urban rabbits as a sustainable urban livestock because they're small and quiet.
 - Mathew asks if rabbits are for adoption or consumption? Kiowa shares that they're from Alaska and are interested in meat consumption as a sustainable way to consume animals. Also interested in wool because they've learned how to turn it into yarn.
- Marine Anderson: Wants to learn about the group.
- Liz Washington: Works at Kids Food Basket and lives, works, and plays in GR.
- Jessy Carl: Graduate from GVSU.

Round Robin Announcements

Committee Members

- Robert: Taught one of Crystal's classes on urban agriculture related to Grand Rapids. Robert shared some education materials with the students. Robert expects that Crystal will be able to have her students create some more education materials. Work season is getting busy, Robert will be presenting in April alongside nationwide colleagues with the EPA talking about watershed related work.
- Steve: Parks & Rec Department moved to 245 State St location as temporary location.

- Carlos: WMEAC has USDA focused urban agriculture workshops starting this month at Blandford Nature Center. They're hosting a Maple Syrup workshop intended for people interested in producing commercial products, not necessarily hobbyists.
- Kimberly: Kids Food Basket is starting to plant in the green house. The farm now has a leading female farmer and younger gentleman leading in Ottawa and Allegan county.
- Dolli: The Citizens Climate Lobby started profiles on people working in environmental justice GR.
- Connie: On January 23rd, The City Commission received an updated form ENTf and the Kent County Food Policy Council regarding urban agriculture, and this committee got a few slides on the presentation to show the City's connection to this work. Information regarding bee keeping and chickens was shared.
- Marshall: Was in Washinton DC during Great Lakes Day to lobby for \$450 million for the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative.
 - Kim asks for an update on the Farm Bill. Marshall shares that they [Congress] cannot come to consensus. They're in gridlock on what should be included in the federal guidelines.
- Mathew: Won American Farmland Trust (100k over four years) to work on increasing local turnover so that we don't get farmland turnover. Hoping to tap into the potential of the metro area to help aging farmers.

Agenda items

2024 Vacancies (*Discussion Item*)

There are three vacancies on the Committee: Blandford Nature Center, the Farmers Market, and GRPS. Prospects to represent Blanford have fallen through. Carlos shared that the previous Blanford representative was unable to identify anyone in the organization that has capacity to fill the spot. Carlos asks for clarification as to why Blandford was identified and asks if it can just be a representative from any urban farm in the City such as New City Neighbors or other local operators. Connie shares that you'd have to change the ordinance.

Steve to reach out to Farmers Market to get a representative.

Kim to reach out to GRPS for a representative. Kim asks if the representative have to be staff or if it can be a Board Member. The group came to a consensus that it cannot be a Board Member

2024 Education Plan (*Discussion Item*)

Robert asks Connie to clarify what the City is looking for in terms of education materials. Connie shares that creating some high-level education materials to keep Commission and residents updated on the work of the committee would be good. Suggested materials topics are the changing ordinances (bee keeping and chickens), engaging in the Kent County Food Policy Council, and the CMP recommendations (desire to explore curbside food waste).

Connie shares that the City Manager said he would like to see an inventory of community gardens in the City. The City Manager suggested the Department of Parks and Recreation and the Office of Sustainability do this work. Connie shared that community gardens in park spaces would be easy to track, but more grassroots efforts could be challenging.

Carlos asks if the committee can get a list of vacant parcels that would be good for community gardens. Connie said that list already exists.

Carlos to work with Vicotria on a specific ask for the City in regard to what the process is for using vacant parcels as community gardens.

Kimberly says that the committee should create a PSA or education campaigns on how to use vacant.

Carlos responds that it would be good to see the reports from the City on what's available and go from there. Marshall agrees and adds that an inventory list would be good to share with residents when doing engagement.

2024 Event List (*Action Item*)

Robert shares that Commission Night Out, which Claros, Robert, and Marshall attended last year, is scheduled this upcoming Tuesday, March 19. Robert asks if this is something the committee wants to table at.

Connie offers that the committee can share a table with the Parks and Recreation Department. Robert to follow up on his availability and on what materials to bring to the event. Connie will try to give more of a heads up on the next scheduled Commission Night out.

Robert asks the committee if they would like to try to get a table at Neighborhood Summit. The committee agrees it would be a good opportunity to get materials to residents. Connie and Marshall suggest doing a workshop on the work being done by the committee.

Victoria to work on creating a doodle poll to get the availability of the committee for the event. Carlos suggests breaking up the event into two-hour shifts.

Carlos brings up Rock the Block [LINC UP] on Saturday June 8 and asks if the committee wants to engage with this event. Connie shares that the committee could potentially have a presence at one of the City's tables.

Vicotria to ask around at City if there are offices going that UAC could participate with.

Adjournment

Meeting adjourned at 6:24 p.m.

Next Meeting – May 8, 2024