

URBAN AGRICULTURE COMMITTEE MINUTES

Wednesday, June 10, 2026 – 4PM

Kids Food Basket – Community Room
1300 Plymouth Ave. NE, Grand Rapids, MI 49505

Committee Members:

Present: Connie Bohatch, Amanda Faber, Sarah Larson, Muriel (Dolli) Lutes, Evvia Marshall, Kimberly Moore,

Absent: Stacy Stout

Other: Kat Hart (City Staff), Robert Cloy II (City Staff), Scott Baker (City Staff), Kathrine Force (Community Member)

Mission:

To educate and empower the community by providing policy review, recommendations, and support for urban agriculture.

Agenda:

- Call to Order: 4:01
- Determination of Quorum
- Approval of Agenda
 - Motion made by Amanda Faber & seconded by Sarah Larson, to move Chicken Ordinance discussion to New Business for June 10, 2026, and postpone Strategic Planning to July/August meeting. Motion carried
 - Motion made by Connie Bohatch & seconded by Kim Moore, to approve the June 10, 2026, agenda as amended. Motion carried
- Approval of Minutes of May 13, 2026, meeting
 - Motion made by Connie Bohatch & seconded by Kim Moore, to approve the May 13, 2026, minutes as presented. Motion carried
- Public Comments
 - Members of the public introduced themselves
 - i. Kathrine Force, founder of Neighborhood Food Circle Network
- Old Business
 - New appointments
 - Stacy Stout, *Blandford Nature Center, 2nd Ward Appointment*
 - Sarah Larson, *The Hartford Insurance, 3rd Ward Appointment*
 - Election of Committee Chair Positions

- i. Amanda Faber (Chair)
 - ii. Kim Moore (Vice Chair)
- New Business
 - Urban agriculture policy recommendations for backyard compost
 - i. Connie Bohatch provided a final draft of compost language edits

Sec. 9.108. - Nuisances Prohibited on Public and Private Property. (5b) *Commercial composting is only permitted in fully enclosed commercially manufactured compost bins on property that is zoned commercial. The size, placement and screening requirements for commercial compost bins shall be determined by the Planning Department through a permit process.*

- ii. Scott Baker provided clarity that the “zoned commercial” restriction does not apply to schools and churches that are in residential zones
 - iii. Motion made Sarah Larson by & seconded by Kim Moore, to approve the compost ordinance as presented. Motion carried
- Urban agriculture policy recommendations for backyard chickens

Sec. 9.213 Chickens. (2) *Chickens may only be kept on a lot which is at least three thousand eight hundred (3,800) square feet in size.*

- i. Why is the minimum lot size 3,800 sq. ft? Change to sq. ft per chicken?

Sec. 9.213 Chickens. (4) *Chickens must be kept in and confined in a properly designed and constructed coop or chicken house, or a fenced and covered enclosure, which may be located only in the "rear yard" of the property, as that term is defined in Chapter 61 of this Code, known as the Zoning Ordinance. The Planning Director may permit an alternate placement where a rear yard does not exist due to existing building placement or for properties that do not have a rear yard, providing that there are no detrimental effects on adjacent properties.*

Sec. 5.2.22 Backyard Chickens (B) *One (1) covered enclosure for the keeping of chickens is permitted, not to exceed six (6) square feet in area per chicken, and not higher than eight (8) feet. This square footage shall not count against the allowable square footage or number of accessory structures permitted by Section 5.2.08.*

- i. Evvia Marshall provided her feedback on the policies as written:
 1. Zoning Section 5.2.22 limits enclosure space to six (6) square feet per chicken. This standard is inconsistent with widely accepted animal care practices and may not provide sufficient space for daily movement.
 2. Additionally, this standard conflicts with the ordinance requirement that chickens be kept in adequate and sanitary conditions. Additional outdoor space beyond the covered enclosure is expected to ensure adequate living conditions.

3. Requiring confinement to a coop or enclosure reduces additional agricultural benefits of owning chickens. Pest control, soil aeration, and scratching down compost are beneficial.

ii. Stacy Stout provided comments via email on the policies as written:

1. I agree with the inserted comment, "confinement to a coop or enclosure reduces additional agricultural benefits of owning chickens." With that said, what's the City's concern - if any - with having chickens confined within a fenced area - not coop/ enclosure - for part of the day? Typically, they'd go back into the coop/ enclosure at night for their safety. I understand not having chickens free range in the neighborhood, but if confined to a yard, that seems reasonable. If fence only is okay, how high does the fence need to be and still align with fencing code?

ii. Should chicken terms: "coop" and/or "run" be defined to the code? Both are considered enclosed structures.

1. Chicken coop: sleeping structure at night
2. Chicken run: an outdoor area for enrichment

iii. The minimum area required is 6 square ft/chicken in the run

iv. Allow for fully fenced (enclosed) yards to be used as a chicken run

Sec. 9.213 Chickens. (5) *Each fenced and covered enclosure shall be designed with adequate yard space for each chicken, and the coop or chicken house and the fenced and covered enclosure combined shall not cover more than fifty (50) percent of the rear yard. Enclosures must be clean and resistant to predators and rodents.*

Sec. 9.213 Chickens. (6) *Each fenced and covered enclosure shall be located at least ten (10) feet from any lot line.*

i. Evvia Marshall provided her feedback on the policies as written:

1. Setbacks from property could force the coop into the interior center of yard- an undesirable location for chickens

ii. Scott Baker outlined if the Coop is zoned as an "accessory structure," the setback would be 3 feet, not 10 feet.

i. Should "side yards" be added to the allowable area?

1. Side yard fence requirements need to be considered

ii. How is the 2 feet difference reconciled between the max fence height & max coop height?

iii. Why is there a 50% limit on covered enclosure in the code?

1. Perhaps the limit should be for coops, and not runs

Sec. 9.213 Chickens. (7) *No person shall keep or allow to be kept more than four (4) chickens on a lot which is less than 5,000 square feet in size.*

Sec. 9.213 Chickens. (8) *No person shall keep or allow to be kept more than six (6) chickens on a lot which is 5,000 square feet or greater in size.*

- i. Evvia Marshall provided her feedback on the policies as written:
 - 1. What's the thought behind this number vs square feet? Can owners with no complaints or issues after a number of years increase their flock?
- ii. Should there be a maximum number of chickens per lot? 12?

Sec. 9.213. Chickens. (10) *Chickens may not be butchered, slaughtered, or otherwise killed, for any reason or any purpose, on any real property on which chickens may be kept pursuant to this ordinance.*

- i. Evvia Marshall provided her feedback on the policy as written:
 - 1. Meat birds aren't allowed, what about if the owner needs to euthanize a sick chicken? Unlike dogs, there aren't chicken vets available.
- ii. Stacy Stout provided comments via email on the policy as written:
 - 1. I agree that people are not going to nor can they have a vet euthanize a sick chicken. If you have chickens, from time to time, you have to euthanize one. Can this read something like, "*chickens cannot be raised for meat ("Meat Chickens"). Chickens may not be butchered or slaughtered for such purposes on any real property on which chickens may be kept pursuant to this ordinance"*?

Sec. 9.214. Chicken Permits. (7) - *An initial permit shall be valid for a period of three (3) years.*

- a. *If, in the judgment of the City Manager or his/her designee, the permittee has abided by all ordinance provisions and permit conditions and has not created a nuisance to the owners or occupants of adjacent properties or the neighborhood, the permit may be renewed for an additional three (3) year period.*
- b. *If the permittee has recorded or verified violations of ordinance provisions or permit conditions but is currently in compliance, the permit may be renewed for an additional one (1) year.*
- c. *However, no permit issued pursuant to this ordinance shall remain valid past the date on which this ordinance either expires or is repealed, whichever is earlier.*
- i. Stacy Stout provided comments via email on the policy as written:
 - 1. Can we extend the permit period to 5 years? A permit can still be suspended or revoked if they aren't following the rules. Let's make it as accessible as possible.
- ii. Why is there a permit time limit at all? Current permit cost is \$25
- Motion made by Amanda Faber to schedule the Chicken ordinance review for August 12, 2026, meeting. Seconded by Sarah Larson. Motion passed
 - 1. Scott Baker will return an edition mocked up by Planning

- Partner Reports
 - City of Grand Rapids Office of Sustainability
 - Neighborhood Match Fund Applications are open at grandrapidsmi.gov/nmf
 - Contracts ranging from \$500 to \$5,000 will be awarded for Grand Rapids resident-led projects that are community focused, inclusive, and promote a deeper sense of belonging among neighbors.
- Agenda items for future meeting on July 8, 2026
 - Determine format for UAC strategic plan review
 - i. Office of Innovation & Continuous Improvement [Project Request Form](#)
 - Discussion of meeting locations for Sept – December 2026
- Motion to adjourn made by Kim Moore and seconded by Dolli Lutes. Motion passes
- Adjournment at 5:35pm

**Next Meeting – Wednesday, July 8, 2026, at 4pm
at Kent MSU Extension “Grand Ideas Garden” (outside)
(775 Ball Ave NE, Grand Rapids, MI 49503)**