

URBAN AGRICULTURE COMMITTEE (UAC)
MEETING MINUTES
Wednesday January 8, 2025
Grand Rapids Public Library (111 Library St NE)

Call to Order: Meeting was called to order at 5:42

Roll Call

Present: Carlos Calderon, Connie Bohatch, Evvia Marshall, Kimberly Moore, Muriel Lutes (Dolli), Robert Cloy

Absent: Steve Krogman

Other: Annabelle Wilkinson – City of Grand Rapids, Chief Sustainability Officer

Approval of Agenda

Motion made by Connie, supported by Carlos, to approve the January 8, 2025, agenda as presented. Motion carried.

Approval of Minutes

Motion made by Carlos, supported by Connie, to approve November 13, 2024, minutes as presented. Motion carried.

Public Comments

None

Round Robin Announcements - Committee Members

Robert: Continuing watershed work. Looking forward to Spring and Summer 2025 to get back out and engage with community.

Carlos: Officially launched micro-grant from the USDA to award up to 24k during a three-year grant period, serving City of Grand Rapids, Kentwood, Muskegon, and Holland. A little flexibility in redefining the urbanized area vs just using municipal boundaries. There will be adjusting and evolution over the years. WMEAC is going through a leadership change currently. Shouldn't be a huge impact, but folks are taking on more responsibility.

Dolli: Citizen Climate Lobby Environmental Justice group and C4 are working on restoring the forest floor in urban areas, somewhere near Garfield park. Looking to connect with faith-based communities as they are the third largest landowners in the City.

Evvia: Thinking about seed starting giveaway and swap. Looking to support community interested in doing this individually. Working with the Farris State Grand Rapids Alumni Council to do service projects. Proposing to start a community garden – looking at Garfield park, but there's a garden in there. Looking to bring together an egg sale hub so that folks can buy local eggs from those with chickens in the City.

Connie: Launched notice of intent to apply for neighborhood match funds. Look to see if you have programs to align with those eight outcomes. Put in a notice of intent to apply as a first step. From then on you will be invited to formally apply. This initial application process was created to avoid the hassle of a large application process for local organizations.

Victoria: List of gardens community gardens:

- Ball Perkins – edible: Parks winterizes water source and turns it on/off, works on capital improvements
- Pleasant Park – nonedible: Parks provides landscaping work and cares for the raingarden
- Martin Luther King Park – edible (temporarily closed for park construction): Parks provides financial programming support and capital improvements
- Garfield Park – edible (temporary location of MLK Park garden): Parks provides financial support for programming
- Highland Park – nonedible: Parks provides water and trash bags
- Briggs Park – nonedible: Parks provide capital improvements as needed
- Westtown Commons – edible (herb garden)

Kim: Kicking off the year busy with yearend giving. Received 100k from a donor to begin providing sack supper to Kent County HeadStart weekend program - must raise match funds to kick that off. Meeting with Kent County Food Policy Council to talk about the food policy plan timeline and needs to get that started. Secured a building to have a standalone facility in Muskegon and increase what is being served in the 2025 school year. Meeting with Shannon Harris of OCC to join their network leadership council and looking at grant opportunities to partner on.

Agenda items

2025 Chair & Vice Chair election (*Action Item*)

- Carlos volunteers for Chair. Unanimously approved.
- Kim volunteers for Vice Chair. Unanimously approved.

2025 Meeting Schedule (*Action Item*)

Kim offers to host the May 14th meeting at Kids Food Basket. Unanimously approved.

Carlos: Let's table the meeting location discussion for the July and September meetings. We will discuss it at the next meeting. Need to identify locations in 1st and 3rd ward.

Update on Ordinance Amendment (*Discussion Item*)

Connie: Move forward with getting rid of the seat designation of GRPS, Kent County, and Blanford and downsizing to 9 members. We're also proposing a change in the number of appointments from the City manager and Mayor, reduce City staff member requirements, and include sustainability to the staff member list to support work moving forward. Brought the recommendations forward to the Committee on Appointments and who voted to move the recommendations forward to the Committee of the Whole on January 14. The City Commission will review and approve or deny. Where this committee is hosted (Parks or Sustainability Department) is an operational change and won't require an amendment.

Carlos: Would the commission members be willing to have any conversations with the committee in terms of what the committee's direction should be?

Connie: Committee should think about what they'd like to work on and provide that list to City leadership. Then there could be more productive conversation. There is an opportunity to do a briefing from the committee to Commission desired.

Kim: There doesn't seem to be much about Urban Ag in the City's Community Master Plan.

Connie: There are some vague points of supporting urban ag work and the committee. Victoria to list recommendations regarding urban ag in the minutes: ■ 1.C.5: Improve accessibility to fresh foods throughout the community, with a focus on food deserts and economically challenged neighborhoods.

- 1.C.6: Continue to support community gardens and promote an edible landscape.

Parks and Recreation Update: Environmental Justice Grant (*Discussion Item*)

Victoria: The Parks and recreation Department received an Environmental Justice Impact grant through EGLE to support urban agriculture work in the City of Grand Rapids. Brief project summary: "The City of Grand Rapids is seeking funding to bolster the current efforts of the community organizations implementing urban agriculture projects in our community parks. We are requesting \$500,000 to support Urban Agriculture projects throughout our community in the following parks located within EJ Communities: Alexander, Ball Perkins, Campau, Dickinson, Douglas, Garfield, Joe Taylor, Kensington, Mary Waters, MLK, Oakdale Gardens, Plaster Creek Family, & Roosevelt. Through community engagement efforts and collaboration, we seek to support organizations' efforts to bring urban agriculture opportunities to disadvantaged populations, so they may reap the benefits of reduced food costs, improved air quality, healthier food practices, and education." This is sort of a catalyst grant for organizations in the City that are seeking financial support to expand their capacity and implement/program a community garden in the park spaces that are in environmental justice zones (as defined by EGLE). The Parks Department will be hiring a part-time employee for the grant period to provide support for awardees.

Carlos: How does this committee fit into that work?

Victoria: Spoke to the grant manager, Parks Superintendent, Joe Sulak, to identify areas of opportunities for this committee to be involved. There are several things that we identified including using your networks for grant outreach, reviewing grant applications, setting up a sustainable system to offboard organizations from grant funding, and much more. We should have more details at the next meeting.

2025 Priorities (*Discussion Item*)

Carlos: Community gardens could be a priority.

Robert: It seems like there has been talk of having an official inventory of community gardens? Within the City.

Evvia: We should be aware of those gardens and if they need help, supplies, or funding. There should be some ways to be connected with them.

Kim: Are there grant opportunities that could support more education?

Connie: Last time there was talk about how to do some strategic planning. I'm willing to look into resources to have some kind of planning session. Committees typically don't have a budget, but once you have a plan, you can strategize to make work happen.

Carlos: The communication piece should also be a priority because some of the work is happening, but folks just aren't aware.

Dolli: Building on that one of the things needed is more people, so communication could grow those connections.

Robert: Recruitment should be a priority for this year.

Carlos: We need three more people for a full committee.

Kim: How would someone get an application for the committee out?

Connie: The form is online, and then you can let Victoria know if someone you know has applied.

Carlos: We could reach out to Creston and Roosevelt Park Farmer Market organizers.

Adjournment

Motion to adjourn made by Robert and supported by Kim. Meeting adjourned at 6:49

Next Meeting – March 12, 2025.

URBAN AGRICULTURE COMMITTEE (UAC)
MEETING MINUTES
Wednesday July 9, 2025
Mulick Park (1632 Sylvan Ave SE, Grand Rapids 49506)

Call to Order: 5:37 pm

Roll Call

Present: Kimberly (Kim) Moore, Muriel (Dolli) Lutes, Evvia Marshall, Connie Bohatch, Robert Cloy

Absent: Carlos Calderon

Other: Nicole Rapacki – Public Services, Robert (Bob) Swain – Public Services, Amanda Faber, John Everett (Grand River Gardens)

Approval of Agenda

Motion made by Kim, supported by Rob, to approve the July 9, 2025, agenda as presented.
Motion carried.

Approval of Minutes

Motion made by Kim, supported by Evvia, to approve the May 14, 2025, minutes as presented. Motion carried.

Public Comments

Amanda Faber: Starting a farm in Northern Kent County. Presenting at an event at Kids Food Basket this Friday – all are welcome. Working on a project to expand biostimulants, which are a fertilizer-like substance with no man-made chemicals added. It is based on using waste materials (organic), and there is a liquid product and a solid product.

John Everett (Grand River Gardens): Working on a number of community gardens. Received some money for the youth to experience gardening. Looking out for the Parks Department funding for community gardens. Just received nonprofit status. Gardens are on lots around Kalamazoo and Hall St.

Round Robin Announcements - Committee Members

Robert: Last day at GVMC is next week. Got a new job at the Sustainability office at the City of Grand Rapids.

Evvia: Working on a proposal for the Urban Agriculture Committee. Evvia will send the proposal over to Carlos and Kim to review. Hosting an event on Friday for urban farmers at Kids Food Basket. Kids Food Basket will be having tours of the farm.

- Robert Swain: Public Services would like to be involved in conversations involving urban farming.

Dolli: Healing from surgery.

Kim: Kids Food Basket is in full swing. Next week is the last week of summer school. Muskegon site is taking off. Several grants are in full swing & closing. Kids Food Basket is continuing to provide produce to their 16 community partners in the four counties they serve: Ottawa, Kent, Muskegon, and Allegan. They continue to host farm to table events almost weekly.

Connie: The Environmental Justice grant is moving to the City Commission next Tuesday. There is a line on that agenda item that calls out that this committee will be involved.

Agenda items

New Business

Grand Rapids Public Services – Composting (*presentation*)

- Partnering with We Care Denali. Just started a food scrap pilot internal to the City. Looking to have a couple drop-off sites in each ward. After that, they'd look to do consumer food scrap collection at restaurants, etc.
 - It would be great to collaborate with this group on how to get information about food scrap drop-offs.
- Every resident gets one free cubic yard of composting a year between May – end of July. Staff will occasionally deliver composting to community gardens. Contact Bob and Nicole for drop off. This drop off also applies to businesses or really any type of urban farm.
- Public services are looking for more input on the most effective model for food scrap drop off and working to create a master plan for this service for the next 10-15 years. July 29th Commission Night Out is the first time they are really rolling out to the community for input.
- They are going to be looking to apply for a biochar machine via a grant coming from EGLE.
- At Commission Night Out, there will be clothing and electronic recycling services for residents.

Grand Rapids Commission Night Out – Outreach opportunity (*discussion item*)

- Robert & Dolli will participate and bring flyers.

Urban Agriculture working session (*discussion item*)

- Kim: Loved both sessions and is now ready to get down to some action steps.

- Next working session to discuss next steps: July 25, 1-3 pm at Kids Food Basket.

Old Business

State of Michigan Grant – Community Gardens

- The grant is going to the City Commission on Tuesday, July 15.

Adjournment:

Next Meeting – September 10, 2025, at Roberto Clemente Park.

URBAN AGRICULTURE COMMITTEE (UAC)
MEETING MINUTES
Wednesday, October 8, 2025
Grand Rapids City Hall MPR 143
(300 Monroe Ave NW, Grand Rapids, MI 49503)

Call to Order: 5:33pm

Roll Call

Present: Evvia Marshall, Dolli Lutes, Kim Moore (Committee Vice-Chair), Carlos Calderon (Committee Chair), Robert Cloy II, Connie Bohatch, Annabelle Wilkinson

Absent: None

Other: Kat Hart – *Office of Sustainability*, Amanda Faber – *Kendaville Farms LLC*, Austin Kanis – *Green Wagon Farm*, Alora Gleason – *Community member*, Megan Huxold – *Community member*, Aaron Newman – *Community member*

Approval of Agenda

Motion made by Dolli, supported by Kim, to approve the October 8, 2025, agenda was presented.
Motion carried.

Approval of Minutes

Motion made by Kim, supported by Dolli, to correct the location of the previous meeting and approve the July 9, 2025, minutes as presented. Motion carried.

Public Comments

- Amanda Faber: inquired about the status of her 2 applications to UAC. She has not received a notice from the City about the acceptance or denial of her application(s) as of 10/8/2025.
 - She also suggested replacing “local food system” to “urban ag” to emphasize the inclusion of smaller producers in the UAC vision statement. Also suggested “food resilience” to embody the scales of food production and the potential disruption of “big-ag” supply chains during disasters.
- Megan Huxold: offered her volunteer services to the UAC and the Office of Sustainability and expressed her enthusiasm to support local growers and urban ag. organizations.

Round Robin Announcements – Committee Members

- Kim: shared that Kid’s Food Basket (KFB) is having their open house on 10/9/2025 for the [new facility in Muskegon, MI](#). KFB is providing 2,300 meals this year to youth in Muskegon. They acquired a six-acre property for food production that will also be open to the community for cooking lessons and support for growing.

- Connie: shared that Parks & Recreation has revised the job description for the upcoming Urban Ag Coordinator position based on the UAC's feedback. She will forward this description to Kim and Robert for review.

Agenda Items

Meeting Schedule:

- Kim: the UAC has considered meeting monthly & adjusting the meeting time to earlier in the day. The UAC is the only committee meeting in the evening. She mentioned that Wednesdays work well for her.
- Connie: mentioned that other committee meetings are scheduled for the afternoon or morning. [Urban Forestry Committee](#) (UFC) meets at 4pm. The 2nd Wednesday of each month still works for her. She suggested 3pm as a starting time.
 - Evvia: Mentioned that 3pm is not her preference due to her full-time job, but could make 4pm.
 - Annabelle: suggested shorter meeting times while meeting monthly. For reference the UFC meets for 45 minutes.
- Kim: motion made to switch the 2026 schedule to monthly on the 2nd Wednesday from 4-5pm
 - Carlos: seconded the motion, let the group know that the November meeting will still be on 11/12 at the GRPL from 5:30 – 7pm.
- Connie: the 2nd Wednesday for November 2026 will be a federal holiday (Veteran's Day) and suggested the 1st Wednesday of November 2026 as an alternative.
 - Carlos: the 1st Wednesday of November 2026 is the day after the 9/3/2026 election day.
 - Kat: suggested taking November 2026 off as the UAC will be meeting monthly for 2026. Further discussion of holding the November 2026 meeting will be held mid-2026.

UAC website updates:

- Kat: gave an update on the necessary fixes needed to make the [UAC page](#) accurate. The UAC agreed that these changes can be made immediately: these include the number of committee seats, the board liaison, and the updated vision & mission statements.
 - She gave an update on the upcoming GovStack platform for the City website and asked the UAC to consider utilizing the UAC page for education, recruitment, and outreach.
- Kim: added that at the previous strategic planning meeting, discussion was held about adding information about necessary permits for backyard animals and greenhouses to the UAC page.

3-year UAC Strategic Plan (SP):

- Kim: Working on the SP for about 6 months. Committee members evaluated the vision & mission statements during the last planning session on 9/8/2025 at Kids' Food Basket.
 - Connie: mentioned that the SP will be transformed into a Word document for easier use.
- Carlos: provided overview of the 3 pillars and how they relate to the original scope of the UAC as designated in the [City Code 6.5 that grants its authority](#).
 - Kat: mentioned that they enjoy the separation of education and access into two pillars.
 - Connie: mentioned that the "original" UAC members expressed great interest in participating events and community outreach so that was the focus of the UAC's activity prior to 2020.
- Carlos: brought up concerns/questions about internal staff supporting this work. Specifically, which responsibilities in the SP will fall to the committee members and which will fall to the City.
 - Annabelle: objectives are lined up with the Food Systems plan, OS will support building relationships with City dept.
- Evvia: requested more specificity on the community education opportunities and funding aspects in the SP. Does the UAC have events in mind? What is the theme of these events and is the UAC interested in attending community events *about* urban ag or events *not about* urban ag?
 - Kat: will provide a "City-sponsored events spreadsheet" from the Office of Special Events to review for 2026. This will allow the UAC to save the dates for large community events and prepare materials and schedules.
- Evvia: brought up concerns about lack of specific goals in the SP. She is unclear on what the UAC wants to accomplish.
 - Kim: mentioned that the SP is a 3-year plan and that the activities & metrics need the most consideration. The objectives & strategies are in a good spot but can be adjusted over the course of the 3 years as needed.
 - Rob: inquired about dedicating more time to reviewing the SP and identifying goals at the upcoming 11/12/25 UAC meeting.

Vision & Mission statements

- Kat: presented her recommendations for the UAC Vision & Mission statements and worked with the committee to adjust the statements into the final, approved, versions:
 - **Vision:** Grand Rapids will strengthen its local food resilience, quality of life and public health for all.
 - **Mission:** To educate and empower the community by providing policy review, recommendations and support for urban agriculture.

- Evvia: Agreed with Amanda Faber’s comment on the connotation of “urban ag” implies large, commercial operations and does not emphasize smaller, homesteading operations
 - Kim: Inquired about the coverage small growers, and homesteading, in the definition of “urban ag” that is also foundational to the UAC

Current committee vacancies:

- Carlos: wondering if out-of-City applications are ineligible and that is why Amanda Faber has not been notified.
- Rob: gave an update on the application process for the UAC appointment. He will follow up on Amanda Faber’s applications.
- Carlos: inquired about ways to promote the vacancies.
 - Kat: let the UAC know she promoted the vacancies in the 9/15/2025 Office of Sustainability e-newsletter

Adjournment: Meeting adjourned at 7:00pm

Next Meeting – Nov. 12, 2025, at the Grand Rapids Public Library (111 Library St. NE, Grand Rapids, MI 49503) at the Ryerson Auditorium (3rd floor) from 5:30pm – 7pm.

URBAN AGRICULTURE COMMITTEE MINUTES

Wednesday, November 12, 2025 – 4PM

Grand Rapids Public Library – Ryerson Auditorium

111 Library St. NE, Grand Rapids, MI 49503

Committee Members Present:

Carlos Calderon (Committee Chair), Evvia Marshall, Dolli Lutes

Others present: Robert Cloy II (City Staff), Megan Huxold, Alora Joelle, Rachel Higuera-Muecke, Kai Gritter (MSU Extension)

Mission:

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

Agenda:

1. Call to Order: 5:36pm
2. Determination of Quorum
3. Approval of Agenda
Motion made by Dolli, supported by Evvia, to approve the November 12, 2025, agenda was presented. Motion carried.
4. Approval of Minutes from the October 8 meeting
Motion made by Dolli, supported by Evvia, to approve the October 8, 2025, minutes as presented. Motion carried.
5. Public Comments
 - Megan Huxold: interested in learning more about the committee.
 - Rachel Higuera-Muecke: here to learn more about the committee.
 - Alora Joelle: going to school for planning and agriculture. Wants to be more involved in the committee. Planning on filling out a paper copy of Board and Commissions application.
 - Kai Gritter: wants to know more about the committee and know how MSU Extension can be involved in the committee.
6. Old Business

Carlos: is there any discussion on any of the old business topics?

Robert: going forward, OS staff will provide a summary of applications received from community members interested in applying for UAC. Committee members will be given a chance to provide feedback.
7. New Business

Meeting Schedule for 2026:

- **Carlos:** last meeting we approved a new schedule for the 2026 year. Switching to monthly and switching the time from 4:00pm-5:00pm. We reduced the meeting time but need meeting locations. Does anybody have preferred locations? Does the GRPL work for the centralized locations? Trying to hold 1 meeting in each of the 3 different wards in the City. Opportunity for other members of the community to attend those meetings.

Locations for 2026 Meeting:

- **Evvia:** what's the reasoning for moving to different locations?
- **Carlos:** trying to be more inclusive of different communities and choosing locations that are related to urban agriculture (community gardens, parks, etc.). The January – May meetings will be held at the Grand Rapids Public Library. The June, July and August meetings will be held outside. Locations will be finalized from the list below at the January 2026 meeting. The September – December meetings will be held back at the Grand Rapids Public Library.
 - Martin Luther King Park, Garfield Park Lodge, Baxter Community Center – 3rd Ward
 - Michigan State Extension, Kids Food Basket, – 2nd Ward
 - John Ball Zoo, Roosevelt Park Neighborhood Association, Las Canchas Garden – 1st Ward

Motion to cancel November 2026 meeting:

- Motion made by Dolli, Second by Evvia: Motion carried

UAC Webpage:

- **Carlos:** Kat working on updates to the website and making it more accessible for community members to find different information.

Review Strategic Plan:

- **Carlos:** UAC met over Summer 2025 to facilitate a strategic planning session. This committee was formed over 10 years ago to educate the community and provide ordinance recommendations to the City Commission. There's no standard procedure for creating urban agriculture/community gardens in the City, so this strategic planning session helps the UAC formalize the process. Hoping to become more of a resource hub of information for community members. The SP is a summary of work that we've done this past year.
- **Carlos:** what are the main priorities within the SP that we want to focus on in 2026?
 - **Community Education:**
 - the main reason that we're here. We want more people to be involved in growing food
 - **Community Access:**
 - other than your backyard, are there public places within the City that we can expand locations to grow food. The Parks and Recreation received a grant

that goes until 2027 to help establish. 9 parks were identified too. The UAC group will act as a guiding body to the Coordinator position, and to the City.

- **Shaping Policy:**
 - submitted policy recommendation to the City Commission in 2021/2022. Including easier to implement ordinances, as well as ordinances that would take more time to implement. In Fall of 2023, they updated the Bees and Chicken permit process to remove barriers. Now, we're waiting on the community master plan to see where all the zoning ordinances will be addressed.
- **Evvia:** task number four in the Shaping Policy category: "Design and Promote a Community Feedback Process to Improve Urban Agriculture Opportunities"
- **Carlos:** in the past, we've attended different events to engage with community. In 2026, with the new Urban Ag. Coordinator position, hopefully there will be other opportunities for engagement.
- **Evvia:** can we define who is "We" for different community events.
- **Carlos:** It's a volunteer effort by the UAC. Whatever committee member has time and capacity to volunteer for the events will be called on.
- **Dolli:** hard to choose 1 thing as a priority as all this work fits together.
 - turning different locations into community gardens – but water access is a big issue for different locations. Was there an assessment done on locations that have water access and viable soil for growing due to different toxins?
- **Evvia:** It's also a land access issue. Any land in Grand Rapids is prioritized for development rather than urban agriculture committee.
- **Carlos:** 23 square miles of vacant land in Detroit, vs 40(ish) square miles of TOTAL land in Grand Rapids. That's why the UAC has been focusing on removing barriers for community residents to grow food on their own land – but also being creative about growing commercialized food in various ways (rooftop)
- **Kai:** have churches been considered?
- **Evvia:** public access is hard for the community to consume that food, as most of it that is grown is usually for the members of the church.
- **Carlos:** another priority we can focus on is trying to work with GRPS on growing food or establishing community gardens on schoolyard space.
- **Carlos:** to review: The Community Feedback Process is a high priority. Participating in Community Events is a secondary priority.
- **Evvia:** why are we looking for funding? What's the distinction between the UAC and City staff?
- **Robert:** Office of Sustainability looking for potential funding through Climate Smart Communities Initiative grant funding. Possible funding ideas include Food System work.

Review 2025 City-Sponsor:

- **Carlos:** if there are any priority events that need to be passed on. UAC members please review the spreadsheet and give feedback to OS staff.
- **Dolli:** once we have educational materials, going to different events (farmers markets) and distributing that information will be helpful in spreading the message for UAC, as well as recruiting other committee members.

8. Partner Reports – Committee Members

Dolli: excited to have more public joining the committee members

9. Agenda Items for future meeting

- 2025 Chair & Vice Chair election

10. Adjournment 7:07pm

**Next Meeting – Wednesday, January 14, 2026 – 4:00pm
at the Grand Rapids Public Library
(111 Library St. NE, Grand Rapids, MI 49503)**