

**URBAN AGRICULTURE COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES
Wednesday January 13, 2021
Webex**

Call to Order - Meeting was called to order at 5:37 p.m.

Roll Call

Present: Connie Bohatch, Joan Huyser-Honig, Alita Kelly, Steve Krogman, Jill Myer, Lisa Oliver-King, Crystal Scott-Tunstall, Liz Visser

Absent: Dave Zimmerman

Other: Lance Kraai (New City Farms), Erik Powers (City Planning Department), Catherine Zietse (City staff liaison)

Approval of Agenda

Motion made by supported by Steve Krogman, supported by Liz Visser, to approve the January 13 agenda as presented. Carries unanimously.

Approval of Minutes

Motion made by Lisa Oliver-King, supported by Alita Kelly, to approve the November 5 minutes. Carries unanimously.

Public Comments

Janet Staal, Director of Nature-Based and Outdoor Education at Westside Christian School, has been working to expand gardening efforts on site. The school would like to add a hoophouse to their gardening area with raised beds but is running into zoning issues. She is here to advocate for policy changes that would allow educational institutions more flexibility with garden structures.

Gordie Moeller is the Double Up Food Bucks coordinator for the Grand Rapids area. There are several stores and farmers markets in the area where this program will soon be in place.

Round Robin Announcements

- Alita Kelly is opening a new grocery store in southeast Grand Rapids and is hoping to incorporate local urban agriculture into their sourcing plans through volunteers and staff working together on shared land. One community partner in this endeavor has been Next Step.
- Connie Bohatch has no updates but had shared information on composting to subcommittee that will work on composting policy recommendations.
- Liz Visser is cataloging seeds and planning for the 2021 growing season at Blandford. The farm is now accepting CSA registrations.
- Steve Krogman & his team has expanded two more parks to organic fertilization.
- Wende Randall shared that Kent County Essential Needs Task Force is working on a project to change the narrative of food insecurity. Janelle Vandergrift is the new coordinator for the Food Policy Council, and applications for the council will soon be opening up.
 - <http://www.entfkent.org/kent-county-food-policy-council/>
- Crystal Tunstall-Scott, affiliate professor of Environmental Studies at Grand Valley State University, starts winter semester next week.

- Lisa Oliver-King shared that Our Kitchen Table is working with Blandford Nature Center to design this year's food garden at Martin Luther King Leadership Academy.
- Jill Myer shared updates on vaccination efforts in Kent County. She encouraged everyone to set up an appointment regardless and to be persistent as they are waiting on more vaccinations and then can open more appointments. Spectrum Health, Mercy Health, and Metro Health are accepting appointments in addition to the Health Department.
- Joan Huyser-Honig has no updates, but shared her appreciation for the conversations Alita Kelly is getting started around food security solutions in southeast GR.

New Business

2021 Committee Chair/Vice Chair Elections

Last year Joan Huyser-Honig served as committee chair and Jill Myer served as vice chair. Joan opened the floor for nominations and discussion on elections for 2021 positions.

Connie Bohatch nominated Joan Huyser-Honig for chair. Alita Kelly and Crystal Scott-Tunstall voiced support. Motion carries unanimously.

Joan Huyser-Honig nominated Jill Myer as vice chair. Jill Myer nominated Alita Kelly and Liz Visser. Liz Visser graciously declined due to her involvement with the West Michigan Grower's Group board. Lisa Oliver-King and Crystal Scott-Tunstall voiced support for both candidates.

After voting, all members selected Alita Kelly as vice chair.

Updates from New City Farm

Lance Kraai introduced himself as the farm director at New City Neighbors. Although New City Neighbors was asked to relocate from their old site at Fourth Reformed Church, they have received great community support and were able to find new property near Leonard St. and Fuller Ave. NE. The new property has a farmhouse and one acre of growing space and they have a lease with Grand Valley State University for additional growing space. The move will be a big operation, as New City Neighbors has invested about \$250,000 in structures like hoop houses, green houses, and other farming equipment (not including their café space and pizza oven), however Lance and the team is excited to make the new space their own. The farmhouse will become office and programming space, and they will also be installing a commercial kitchen space.

In terms of City code and zoning, Lance said the farmhouse has been easy to switch from residential to commercial however the absence of urban agriculture zoning has meant that New City Neighbors needs to apply for special land use permit for the farming portions of the property. The cost for a special land use permit is \$2000, which does not include necessary planning and survey expenses. A public hearing is also required and while that cannot be scheduled until March due to other projects, Lance expects the permit to be approved. The need for irrigation and lack of zoning around urban agriculture have also been challenging (the growing space at the new property is zoned low density residential). He shares this all with the committee for consideration as they make policy recommendations.

Joan Huyser-Honig thanked Lance for the work he is doing and hopes the committee's work with the City will be helpful.

Edible Landscaping Task Force

Joan Huyser-Honig thanked Crystal Scott-Tunstall for having her students complete the edible landscaping tree mapping exercise and reported that she has heard back from other higher education

institutions in the area with interest on the project. She has also been having many conversations with community members and other cities about how to improve edible landscaping, including types of fruit trees for urban settings and how plantings can meet Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design guidelines.

Joan extended an invitation to the committee and members of the public to join an Edible Landscaping Task Force to advance work in Grand Rapids. She will ask members of the Urban Forestry Committee as well. Lisa Oliver-King, Ayanfe Jamison, Janet Staal, and Wende Randall voiced interested.

Old Business

Policy Recommendations Status Update

Erik Powers reported that he has been reviewing committee documents including the 2019 Committee Recommendations and 2015 Considerations for Future Planning and Zoning report (Urban Roots). In discussions with Planning Department staff on a timeline and approach for policy changes, it was determined that the best way to proceed will be to compile all committee recommendations and work with the Planning Department to create an implementation strategy.

The recommendations and implementation plan will be introduced to City Commission at the Committee of the Whole. Changes will be presented as zoning ordinance text amendments. From there, the Planning Department will take proposed code changes to respective boards. Most of the changes will be made through the Planning Commission, who will make the final recommendations to the City Commission for final consideration.

Liz Visser suggested that the committee revisit and add more details to the recommendations on accessory structures, given the recent insight from Janet Staal at Westside Christian and Lance Kraai at New City Farm. Her primary research on the topic was focused more on residents. Erik Powers mentioned the possibility of zoning updates to allow for farming structures on property owned by community or nonprofit organizations in certain zoning districts.

The final topic that the committee needs to research and make recommendations on is composting. Lisa Oliver-King volunteered to lead the research.

Urban Agriculture in Grand Rapids Infographic

Liz Visser shared a draft infographic that gives an overview of main agricultural activities and when permits are required in Grand Rapids. Committee members agreed it was visually appealing and easy to follow. Joan Huyser-Honig suggested adding details on front yard gardening and height requirements. Erik Powers added that the regulations parkways are a maximum vegetation height of 30" to preserve sightlines, and no structures allowed to preserve access to utilities and fire hydrants.

Catherine Zietse will work with Liz to confirm all details are correct and add it to the City's website.

Wende Randall suggested distribution of the infographic with neighborhood associations and food pantries. Wende also requested that May committee meeting agenda include Janelle Vandergrift to present on the objectives and roster of Kent County Food Policy Council.

Meeting adjourned at 6:42 p.m.

Next Meeting – March 10, 2021 5:30 p.m.

**URBAN AGRICULTURE COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES
Wednesday March 10, 2021
Webex**

Call to Order - Meeting was called to order at 5:36 p.m.

Roll Call

Present: Robert Cloy, Michelle Holliday, Joan Huyser-Honig, Alita Kelly, Jill Myer, Crystal Scott-Tunstall, Liz Visser

Absent: Connie Bohatch, Lisa Oliver-King, Steve Krogman, Dave Zimmerman

Other: Wende Randall (ENTF), Erik Powers (City Planning Department), Catherine Zietse (City staff liaison)

Approval of Agenda

Alita Kelly requested to add a new business item to the agenda regarding opportunities for community gardening and youth programming in the MLK Park neighborhood. Crystal Scott-Tunstall also requested to add an item for an upcoming engagement opportunity.

Motion made by supported by Liz Visser, supported by Alita Kelly, to make requested additions to the agenda. Motion carries unanimously.

Approval of Minutes

Motion made by Jill Myer, supported by Liz Visser, to approve the January 13 minutes. Carries unanimously.

Public Comments

Kate Robinson introduced herself as a resident who was listening in tonight. She is interested on policy changes – particularly on backyard chickens – and would like to see policies shift from being so dependent on neighbor opinion to being more dependent on the condition and management of the property.

Welcome to New Members

Michelle Holliday teaches 4th, 5th, and 6th grade at GR Montessori and is the committee representative for Grand Rapids Public Schools. She has done a lot of work with Groundswell, gardens on campus, and is interested in connecting kids with their city.

Robert Cloy is an urban forest coordinator with Friends of Grand Rapids Parks and coordinates the community garden near Cesar Chavez Elementary School with Roosevelt Park Neighborhood Association. He is an advocate for outdoors and urban agriculture and is excited to learn and contribute to committee.

Round Robin Announcements

- Erik Powers (City Planning Department) – The Planning Commission has approved New City Farms' special land use permit for agricultural activities at their new property.
- Jill Myers (Kent County Health Department) – The county is getting a steady stream of COVID-19 vaccines, and she encouraged members to signed up at any site available.
- Liz Visser (Blandford Nature Center) – Is in the full swing of maple syrup season and starting seeds in greenhouse. Liz and some other local farmers will be starting a local chapter of

National Young Farmers Coalition in West Michigan – she will keep the committee up to date with opportunities to collaborate.

- Michelle Holliday (GRPS) – Is now teaching hybrid, with in-person classes 2 days a week. Her students have recently started milkweed seeds, tapped maple trees on campus, and will plant native seeds this spring.
- Wende Randall (Kent County Essential Needs Task Force) – The new Kent County Food Policy Council is accepting applications until March 15. They are looking for backgrounds in business, health, education, nonprofit, and government, as well as community members in urban and rural settings. The ENFT Food and Nutrition Coalition is also working on shared messaging to change narrative of hunger from a scarcity mindset to an abundance mindset.
- Robert Cloy – Is planning for the upcoming season at the Roosevelt Park community garden. He has also met with several community members (including members of this committee) to explore how Friends of GR Parks can support urban agriculture with tree plantings and other community initiatives.
- Alita Kelly – Introduced herself to new committee members. She is co-founder of the Southeast Market, chair of Boston Square Business Association, and vice chair of this committee.
- Crystal Tunstall-Scott – Said hello to new members and introduced herself as a professor at GVSU in the Environmental and Sustainability Studies program.
- Joan Huyser-Honig – Reported the ad hoc edible landscaping task force met and decided to prioritize mapping and updating edible trees and bushes, creating signage for trees producing good crops, and are considering a demonstrating planting site in southeast Grand Rapids.
- Catherine Zietse (City staff liaison) – The urban agriculture infographic shared at last meeting has been updated and will be placed on the City website. The Parks Department is also working with Roosevelt Park Neighborhood Association to relocate their farmers market to Roberto Clemente Park. Committee members and residents interested in the City's master plan update process and input opportunities can sign up for email updates at <https://www.grandrapidsmi.gov/Government/Programs-and-Initiatives/Master-Plan-Updates>

Old Business

Accessory Structure Policy Review

Liz Visser updated previous recommendations to include perspectives and experiences of Lance Kraai from New City Farm and Janet Staal from Westside Christian School. Her goal is to make the recommendations easy to implement and enforce, as well as simple for residents. She asked if there were other perspectives that should be added, or any other research needed.

Crystal Scott-Tunstall suggested the addition of Mr. Malski's issues with residential greenhouses. Catherine Zietse will work with Liz to incorporate into recommendations.

Composting Policy Review

Catherine Zietse shared Lisa Oliver-King's preliminary research with the committee. She is coordinating research with Bill Stough, who is working on a similar report for Kent County. Recommendations include eliminating requirement for commercially manufactured composting systems and offering educational classes for residents.

One question Lisa had for the committee to consider was whether composting should be allowed on an uninhabited or vacant lot, if permission was received from the property owner. Currently, residential

composting is only permitted on the premises of an occupied residential dwelling. Joan Huyser-Honig replied that she was in favor of the idea.

Crystal Tunstall-Scott asked if recommendations would explore open air composting. Joan Huyser-Honig replied that the committee's past conversations on this topic were to remain with enclosed systems due to concerns with pests and rodents in the city. Liz Visser clarified that the efficiency of composting in enclosed systems is dependent on scale – although residential backyard composting can be hard to turn, it takes longer to break down food waste and so enclosed systems are helpful to keep out animals. Larger compost piles (i.e. for a farm operation) that are constantly maintained at the right temperature will decompose matter quicker, greatly reducing the risk of odor and pests.

Next Steps in Policy Recommendations and Review Process

Erik Powers shared updates from the Planning Department. He has been reviewing the City's current ordinances to make sure committee recommendations cover all applicable sections and he will use committee input to create a report outlining the procedures for updating those sections. He envisions adding a standalone urban agriculture section to the zoning ordinance under Use Regulations (section 9), similar to the City of Detroit, with references to other applicable sections.

Erik will begin to draft ordinance language updates based on recommendations submitted thus far, and once the composting recommendations are completed everything will be packaged and introduced to City Commission. From there, recommendations will be taken to the Planning Commission to make zoning text amendments. Erik suggested the committee revisit plans for public outreach, which will be especially important to demonstrate efforts and support when recommendations are presented to the Planning Commission.

Joan Huyser-Honig inquired if the committee needs to do any work at this point other than complete composting recommendations. Erik replied that nothing else is needed at this point, and he will share draft language with them committee once it is completed.

Catherine Zietse asked if there is still a backlog of Planning Commission agenda items and if the committee should request to get on the agenda now even if recommendations are not completed. Erik replied that there is more flexibility on this matter, and he will look into available openings in the agenda at upcoming meetings.

New business

MLK Freedom School and Community Garden

Last fall, Alita Kelly led the MLK Freedom school youth program funded by the City's Neighborhood Match Fund. She is looking forward to engaging neighborhood youth in the MLK Park neighborhood again this summer. They have filled their current growing space at Alita's residence and would like to expand into the park, with the goal to create a community garden that will have produce available for youth in the Freedom School program and others in the neighborhood. She hopes it can be a model for neighborhood stores to engage the community and reduce cost for fresh produce.

Alita has received initial support from Friends of Grand Rapids Parks and will be reaching out to the Parks Department next. Jill Myer shared that she was involved in a community garden at Joe Taylor Park years ago and can follow up with Alita on ideas after the meeting.

Juneteenth Outreach Opportunity

Crystal Scott-Tunstall shared that she has been invited to participate in a Juneteenth community event. She was asked to share information on gardening and urban agriculture. The committee has Alyssum seeds, information sheets, and posters from the 2020 Neighborhood Summit and other past outreach efforts. Liz Visser has gardening resource documents from previous workshops that she can share. Wende Randall suggested that Crystal connect with Julie Brunson at HOPE Gardens for additional materials to share.

Joan Huyser-Honig asked the group if there are other community events or opportunities for outreach this summer. Wende Randall suggested GRPS Meet Up/Eat Up food distribution sites. The list of locations is usually finalized in June.

Agenda items for the May meeting will include community outreach and outdoor committee meetings.

Adjourned 6:43 p.m.

Next Meeting – May 12, 2021 5:30 p.m.

**URBAN AGRICULTURE COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES
Wednesday May 12, 2021
Webex**

Call to Order - Meeting was called to order at 5:35 pm

Roll Call

Present: Robert Cloy, Joan Huyser-Honig, Alita Kelly, Crystal Scott-Tunstall, Connie Bohatch, Steve Krogman, Dave Zimmerman

Absent: Michelle Holliday, Jill Myer, Lisa Oliver-King, Liz Visser

Other: Wende Randall and Janelle Vandergrift (ENTF), Catherine Zietse (City staff liaison)

Approval of Agenda

Motion made by Steve Krogman, supported by Crystal Scott-Tunstall, to approve the agenda. Motion carries unanimously.

Approval of Minutes

Motion made by Alita Kelly, supported by Robert Cloy, to approve the March 10 minutes. Motion carries unanimously.

Public Comments

Janet Staal from Westside Christian School is listening in tonight, hoping to hear an update on hoophouse policy changes because her school has a hoophouse project for their school garden that is funded and ready to go.

Joan Huyser-Honig asked City representatives at the meeting what the timeline was for policy review. Connie Bohatch responded she was uncertain, as the process will be managed by the Planning Department. She will follow up.

Round Robin Announcements

- Alita Kelly – Southeast Market received approval from the Parks Department for raised garden beds at MLK Park this summer, along with youth programming at the MLK Summer Day Camp. They will discuss food justice, grow food together, do mindfulness and yoga with Resilient Roots yoga, cooking demo with food from the garden.
- Crystal Scott-Tunstall – Spring/summer courses have begun at GVSU and she is coordinating internships for the Environmental Studies Department. She spoke at a webinar on local food justice issues with Lisa Oliver-King, NAACP, and Boston Square Neighborhood Association. She has also been appointed to the Kent County Food Policy Council. New City Urban Farm is having a plant sale this weekend from 9am-12pm. She will also be at a Juneteenth community event at Dickinson Park from 1-7pm with space for our committee to get input from the public.
- Robert Cloy – Friends of GR Parks have been discussing ways to plant more fruiting trees in the city along with the City Forester, who is supportive but wants to see engaged groups to care for fruit trees long term. Friends has been working towards the goal of planting 400 trees this spring. The Roosevelt Park community garden is getting ready for the growing season as well with community outreach.
- Steve Krogman – No updates; the Parks Department is excited to work with Alita this summer.

- Dave Zimmerman – Habitat has completed all of the homes at Plaza Roosevelt and the Dwelling place buildings are filling up with tenants. They are welcoming their first group of volunteers back onto build sites since Covid hit.
- Joan Huyser-Honig – Shared that redbud blossoms go great on salads (taste like snow peas).

Old Business

Kent County Food Policy Council Updates

Janelle Vandergrift from the Kent County Food Policy Council reported that they have officially formed the council and have 18 members. They will have their first meeting in July (then September) and will narrow down focus for moving forward policy and food issues in the county. They will have workgroups launching this fall on research and policy; equity; and education and outreach. Workgroups will be open to anyone, not just council members. Follow on [Facebook](#) or sign-up for their [newsletter](#) for updates.

Wende Randall added that the council had been planning on 15 seats but received 46 applications so expanded to 18 seats, with three additional seats for residents. They are excited to get started.

Aquinas College Goat Program Updates

Connie Bohatch shared that the City of Grand Rapids Code Compliance Department has approved Aquinas College to bring goats onto campus for one week this summer for the purpose of invasive species removal. The project was set to happen last year but was postponed due to the pandemic.

The City's current ordinance does not allow livestock animals to be kept within 100 ft of residences, and so this initiative with Aquinas will act as a demonstration project for how ordinances could be improved. One key for this project is that the animals will be on campus temporarily.

Aquinas will be contracting with the company Munchers on Hooves (out of Coldwater, MI) to bring 20 goats on campus from July 17-24, where they will move around between four areas of campus. Because most of the invasive species are along Coldbrook Creek, Aquinas will be responsible for installing silt fencing to prevent goat excrement from entering the water. Aquinas is also responsible for notifying neighbors, which they intend to do through social media and Eastown Community Association newsletters. Initial outreach for the initiative in 2020 was well received by neighbors.

Joan Huyser-Honig inquired if the City intends to publicize the demonstration project as well. Connie Bohatch replied that they had not considered it yet, but the committee could take ownership of making that happen.

New business

Composting Policy Review

Joan Huyser-Honig shared recommendations for policy updates and best practices on composting. The main issues with the current ordinance are that it is too restrictive on container requirements and does not address composting for organizations such as urban farms or schools. Recommendations are summarized as follows:

- *Expand composting beyond the premises of an occupied residential dwelling so that schools, churches, community gardens, urban farms, and other organizations may compost.*
 - *Allow organizations to compost more than 64 cubic feet (about 2.37 cubic yards) at a time.*
 - *Allow renters to compost. Also consider allowing composting on vacant lots or unoccupied residential lots if owners give permission.*
- *Allow for composting on side yards and corner lots.*

- *Expand allowed compost containers beyond "a fully enclosed and commercially manufactured compost receptacle" to allow for certain homemade systems.*
- *Consider a municipal program that promotes composting, such as offering discounted compost bins for residents, perhaps after taking a composting class.*

Connie Bohatch shared that a lot of issues arose when ordinance was initially put in place. Particular concern came from southeast residents around the potential for compost to attract rodents and animals, which led to the current restrictions on what content is allowed. The City had also previously discussed providing education but received pushback from residents that requiring classes was too paternalistic of an approach. Connie also shared that at one point the City considered purchasing composting bins in bulk to have for residents to purchase at an affordable price. She will follow up with James Hurt in Public Services to see if this program was ever implemented.

Joan Huyser-Honig asked for clarification on if rental units were allowed to compost under the current ordinance. Connie explained that the original ordinance specified owner-occupied units (and excluded rental properties) because any violation with a rental property falls on the property owner, therefore there was some pushback by rental property owners. A different process could be looked at for rental properties. Joan stated that changing this would remove a barrier for residents.

Joan also asked what the volume of complaints has been since the composting ordinance has been in place. Connie Bohatch said that complaints were much less than what they originally anticipated. She can follow up with specific data. Complaints about composting that do come through Code Compliance often are associated with other issues on the property such as brush piles and overgrown vegetation.

Catherine Zietse asked Connie if past conversations on the composting policy had considered organizations or businesses. Connie replied that it was strictly residential.

Catherine will include the follow up information provided by the Community Development office into the recommendations and share an updated copy with the Planning Department.

Policy Recommendations and Review Process

No staff from the Planning Department were present at the meeting. Catherine Zietse will follow up for next steps.

Future 2021 Meeting Locations

As the City continues to revise reopening plans, in-person meetings are a possibility if the committee chooses to do so. In the past, summer meetings have taken place outdoors at various locations throughout the community.

After some discussion, the committee agreed they are comfortable meeting outdoors as a group. The July meeting will be at Martin Luther King Park and the September meeting will be at the Roosevelt Park community garden. Catherine can explore options for digital options at these outdoor meetings if any committee member is uncomfortable gathering in person.

Meeting adjourned at 6:32 pm.

Next Meeting – July 14, 2021 5:30 p.m. at Martin Luther King Park (900 Fuller Ave. SE)

MEETING NOTICE



CITY OF GRAND RAPIDS

URBAN AGRICULTURE COMMITTEE

JULY 2021 MEETING DETAILS

The Grand Rapids Urban Agriculture Committee will hold its regularly-scheduled July meeting on:

Wednesday, July 14

5:30 p.m.

Martin Luther King Park

(900 Fuller Ave. SE Grand Rapids MI 49506)

The meeting will be held in person and outdoors. A minimum six-foot distance will be maintained for all participants.

All citizens are invited to attend this public meeting. Questions related to specific agenda items, dates and locations of future meetings or requests for disability related accommodations may be directed to 616-456-3696.

**URBAN AGRICULTURE COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES
Wednesday September 8, 2021**

Call to Order - Meeting was called to order at 5:34 p.m.

Roll Call

Present: Connie Bohatch, Robert Cloy, Michelle Holliday, Joan Huyser-Honig, Alita Kelly, Steve Krogman, Jill Myer, Lisa Oliver-King, Crystal Scott-Tunstall, Liz Visser

Absent: Dave Zimmerman

Other: Wende Randall (Kent County ENTFF), Janelle Vandergrift (Kent County Food Policy Council), Rebekah Reese, Raine Adajo, and Mikayla Rowden (Michigan Young Farmers Coalition), and Catherine Zietse (City staff liaison)

Approval of Agenda

Joan Huyser-Honig shared that there are several climate change initiatives being presented to City Commission later this month and proposed that the committee postpone the climate resolution agenda item until next meeting once more has been shared with Commission.

Motion made by Connie Bohatch, supported by Jill Myer, to remove the climate resolution from tonight's agenda and postpone until November. Motion carries unanimously.

Approval of Minutes

Motion made by Jill Myer, supported by Alita Kelly, to approve the May 12 minutes. Carries unanimously. (No minutes from cancelled July meeting.)

Public Comments

Wende Randall encouraged the committee to consider how they could advocate for American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) dollars to be used for agriculture infrastructure like water access. Connie Bohatch shared that \$2 million of ARPA funding is currently earmarked for a community participatory budget process and a steering committee will be reviewing applications from community. The timeline is still being defined. <https://www.grandrapidsmi.gov/Government/Programs-and-Initiatives/Participatory-Budgeting>

Matt Channing is the new Agricultural Preservation Specialist with the Kent County Administrators Office. Although he works mostly with rural agriculture, he is attending tonight looking for overlap of work with current urban agriculture efforts and to get to know the work of the committee.

Janelle Vandergrift from the Kent County Food Policy Council reported that their group has had two meetings so far. One current initiative is advocating for Grand Rapids Public Schools to include food and nutrition strategies and actions in the district's strategic plan.

Round Robin Announcements

Alita Kelly gave a brief overview of the MLK Peace Dream Garden that was established in the park this summer. Gardening was a regular part of the 10-week program with kids ages 6 to 10 at the MLK summer day camp and she is looking to continue the program with Baxter Community Center this fall.

Other member updates:

- Joan Huyser-Honig is planting more edible landscaping at her church this summer and fall.
- Robert Cloy – The Roosevelt Park community garden is winding down for the year and selling produce at the Roberto Clemente farmers market.
- Michelle Holliday – Has been involved with the GREEN initiative (Grand Rapids Environmental Education Network), with goal to support GRPS teachers in developing place-based education and getting kids outside during the school day (both on-site and field trips). Biggest issues with gardens at GR Montessori are access to water and getting volunteers in the summer months. Michelle would like to see growth of industrial compost systems in school and more use of school grounds for gardens and outdoor classes.
- Liz Visser – Peak summer season at Blandford, with lots of planting, weeding, and harvesting
- Jill Myer – Cesar Chavez Farmers Market + park ribbon cutting this Friday at 4pm. The Health Department is also kicking off a Park Rx program for public parks and green spaces.
- Crystal Tunstall-Scott – The Juneteenth event went very well and she thanked the committee for their support.

Old Business

Report from Aquinas College Goat Project, July 2021

Catherine Zietse reported on behalf of Jessica Bowen, Sustainability Coordinator at Aquinas College, that the goat project to remove invasive plants at Aquinas College this summer went very well. City staff coordinated with Aquinas to include a small section about the committee's role in the project in the media release and communication materials.

Update on Policy Recommendations

The City has hired a new assistant planning director that will be reviewing the committee's policy recommendations. Joan Huyser-Honig and Alita Kelly will meet with him next week to bring him up to speed on the committee's work thus far.

New business

Seeding Reclamation Proposal for Grand Rapids Land Bank Properties

Liz Visser and Alita Kelly serve on the West Michigan Chapter of the Young Farmers Coalition, and have been working with Rebekah Reese, Raine Adajo, and Mikayla Rowden (presenting tonight), and group of growers and advocates on a proposal for land bank properties.

Rebekah Reese shared a personal story of three friends who each started farming recently but had vastly different experiences based on race. People of color hit several roadblocks, especially systemic barriers that prevent them from accessing and owning land. Additionally, recent experience with the pandemic and food system challenges have taught us the importance of growing food close to where we need it, and one way of doing that is to allocate more land for farming. The group is looking at vacant properties in the city and would like to propose that the City give the lots to BIPOC (Black and Indigenous People of Color) growers on which to live and grow as an act of reparation. The initiative was inspired by the Detroit Black Farmer Land Fund.

Joan Huyser-Honig asked if it was known how many people would like farm to but cannot because of land challenges. Rebekah replied that the group started with six and is now at eight interested individuals. Many folks want to garden who don't know how, so there will be a large outreach and education component to the work.

Wende Randall asked if the group was looking to purchase land or if there be an application process. They are still in exploratory phases, but their main priority is the ability to maintain access to the land even if growers change.

Alita Kelly shared that two Land Bank properties currently of interest to the group are 719 & 710 Cornwall SW. Initial soil testing at one site came back with good results. Combined, the properties are just under 0.25 acre. Price is not listed but would be negotiated with the city. They are unsure about water access on site.

Joan Huyser-Honig inquired the total number of properties the group will be asking for, given the city's current priority for housing. Alita replied that they were initially thinking of 2-4 lots to start but are open to recommendations from this committee. Rebekah added that they would like to work with a local housing partner to put small homes on some properties.

Connie Bohatch encouraged the group to explore many lots, even those that might not be listed. Previously community gardening has been allowed on lots that were deemed not buildable. It would be good to have multiple options of ownership for the City to consider in the proposal. Wende Randall advised the proposal to think through ward distribution of lots, with potentially a greater investment in the third ward. Land ownership through a cooperative might negate some liability issues. Crystal suggested the group look at how Greencorps Chicago obtained lots from the City.

Alita Kelly has made connections with the University of Michigan School for Environment and Sustainability masters program to support the development of a full proposal for the project. The City's Economic Development Department has requested that any proposal come through the Urban Agriculture Committee.

The Urban Agriculture Committee will make a formal motion once a full proposal is submitted.

More information:

Seeding.reclamation.coalition@gmail.com

https://www.gofundme.com/f/seeding-reclamation?utm_campaign

Agenda items for the November meeting will include climate resolution and approval of 2022 meeting calendar.

Adjourned 6:41 p.m.

Next Meeting – November 10, 2021, 5:30 p.m.

**URBAN AGRICULTURE COMMITTEE
DRAFT MEETING MINUTES
Wednesday November 10, 2021**

Call to Order - Meeting was called to order at 5:37 p.m.

Roll Call

Present: Robert Cloy, Michelle Holliday, Joan Huyser-Honig, Jill Myer, Crystal Scott-Tunstall, Dave Zimmerman

Absent: Connie Bohatch, Alita Kelly, Liz Visser, Steve Krogman, Lisa Oliver-King

Other: Khara DeWit (Southeast Market), Annabelle Wilkinson (City of GR Office of Sustainability), Janelle Vandergrift (Kent County Food Policy Council), Wende Randall (Kent County ENTf), Catherine Zietse (City staff liaison).

Approval of Agenda

Motion made by Jill Myer, supported by Crystal Scott-Tunstall, to approve November 10 agenda as presented. Motion carries unanimously.

Approval of Minutes

Motion made by Jill Myer, supported by Robert Cloy, to approve the September 8 minutes as presented. Motion carries unanimously.

Public Comments

None.

Round Robin Announcements

- Crystal Scott-Tunstall – GVSU students in the Environmental Studies program will be doing a sustainability showcase online from November 14-20. Some of their projects are about food & agriculture in the community. www.gvsu.edu/ens/fall2021showcase
- Jill Myer – none
- Janelle Vandergrift – The Kent County Food Policy Council is working on a community data collection project called Everybody Eats: Highlighting Food Experiences in Kent County. Includes a series of interviews with the Rapidian.
 - [Lisa Oliver-King](#), Our Kitchen Table
 - [Teresa Hendricks](#), Migrant Legal Aid
- Wende Randall – ENFT is working with the Social Innovation program at GVSU to interview local food pantry partners who are transitioning to market models that sell local produce. ENTf is also reinstituting action teams in the Food and Nutrition Coalition – will share out opportunities for Urban Agriculture Committee members to participate.
- Robert Cloy – Friends of GR Parks is winding down their tree planting season. They recently planted 12 pawpaw trees in Riverside Park, and Robert has extra pawpaw, chestnut and hazelnut trees (would like to get in the ground before winter) – contact him if interested.
- Michelle Holliday – GREEN (Grand Rapids Environmental Education Network) is a cohort of GRPS teachers creating place-based education and writing curriculum (community partners [here](#)). Would like to share the GRPS schoolyard inventory at a future meeting.
- Joan Huyser-Honig – shared she recently received pawpaw fruit and is hoping to plant them in the spring.

Old Business

Update on Seeding Reclamation Proposal

Khara DeWit is sharing the update on behalf of Southeast Market, as Alita Kelly could not attend the meeting this evening. The group of urban growers that presented the Seeding Reclamation proposal at the September committee meeting was initially formed through the West Michigan Young Farmers coalition, however they are now separating into an independent group. The Seeding Reclamation group is looking to lease the land at the former Urban Roots garden for growing. They are looking to lease instead of purchase the land, which split from the original vision with the Young Farmers Coalition.

The West Michigan Young Farmers Coalition will be rebranding the initiative as the West Michigan BIPOC Growers Fund and will adopt a similar model to existing groups in Detroit and Washtenaw County who are fundraising for land ownership as an act of reparations. The goal will be to fundraise \$50,000 (through the updated Go-Fund-Me page), then redistribute to BIPOC growers through an application process. She is hoping the Urban Agriculture Committee will provide support and expertise for the fund as it evolves. The group's focus will remain on acquiring urban land. Community funds raised up to this point (about \$5,500) will go to the Seeding Reclamation growers.

Khara shared that the proposal to use land bank properties for urban agriculture is moving ahead as well, but separately from the Seeding Reclamation project. Alita Kelly wrote a project proposal to the University of Michigan School for Environment and Sustainability masters program and recently heard back that the project was selected. Starting in January 2022, four students will assist with policy and program research with the goal to provide with tangible framework that can be replicated in other cities. The project is expected to take 1.5 years.

Additionally, Southeast Market and WMEAC has received a USDA Urban Agriculture Innovation grant to support planning and outreach for Freedom Farm Collective. The grant will create a business plan for a new urban farm, enhance curriculum for Freedom School, and provide funds for Alita Kelly, Khara DeWit, and Carlos (WMEAC) to visit urban farms around the country. The Urban Agriculture Committee will have the opportunity to support the work by helping with focus groups and community engagement efforts. Additional detail provided in November 11 press release.

Update on Policy Recommendations

Joan Huyser-Honig shared that she, Alita Kelly, and Catherine Zietse met with Assistant Planning Director Tyler Kent in October. He is drafting revisions to bees and chicken ordinances with committee recommendations along with researching current state policies. His goal is to share revised policies with City staff in zoning and code compliance in November and December, and present to the committee at the January 12 meeting.

New business

Presentation on City Climate Change Initiatives

Annabelle Wilkinson from the City of Grand Rapids Office of Sustainability presented on climate change initiatives. The City has seen great success in environmental sustainability over the last couple of decades and is now focusing more on human centered approaches.

In the near term, the City is committed to integrating the recently announced municipal carbon reduction goals of 85% by 2030 and net zero by 2040 into City policies, projects, and plans, as well as highlighting climate change and environmental justice into the comprehensive Community Master Plan. They will also be co-creating a climate action and adaptation plan and completing a communitywide carbon inventory by September of 2022.

Opportunities for the Urban Agriculture Committee to engage with climate work include participation in the Community Master Plan, acting as a resource for incorporating food justice and food waste reduction into the Climate Action and Adaptation Plan, and continuing to cultivate partnerships for innovative projects such as Aquinas College. While the Community Master Plan may not highlight urban agriculture specifically, the committee can advocate through connecting food systems to climate adaptation and climate justice.

Several committee members voiced agreement to the importance of including food systems in the conversation of climate adaptation and long-range city planning. Michelle Holliday asked Annabelle Wilkinson if her office was working directly with school districts on these initiatives, as these institutions are a large contributor to energy usage, building footprint and food waste. Annabelle responded they are at the beginning stages of incorporating education. Michelle recommended that they begin directly with administration.

Michelle also asked if citywide composting and food waste reduction would be a part of the climate adaptation plan. Annabelle shared that the Office of Sustainability and the Department of Public Works is very interested in implementing a program, but it is a matter of funding and timing. The City will need a lot of community support and education to get such a program going.

Review and Approve 2022 Committee Meeting Calendar

A schedule for 2022 committee meetings was drafted based on the same pattern of meetings on the first Wednesday of every other month at 5:30 p.m. Meetings will be held in person with exceptions only for extenuating circumstances.

Locations for outdoor summer meetings in the community were decided to be Martin Luther King Park in May (Ward 3), Kent/MSU Extension in July (Ward 2), and Roosevelt Park Community Garden in September (Ward 1).

Motion made by Jill Myer, supported by Joan Huyser-Honig, to approve the discussed meeting dates and locations. Motion carries unanimously.

2022 Committee Goals and Workplan

After some discussion the committee agreed that community education around chickens, bees, and composting are priorities for 2022, along with integration of urban agriculture into climate adaptation planning initiatives. The committee should take advantage of other City outreach events to maximize reach.

Agenda items for next meeting:

- Review of draft amended chicken and bee ordinances
- Further development of 2022 community outreach and education activities
- Chair and vice chair elections
 - Joan Huyser-Honig let the committee know she plans to step down as chair. Please come prepared to the January meeting with nominations.

Adjourned 6:49 p.m.

Next Meeting – January 12, 2022 5:30 p.m.