



City of Cambridge

O-10
IN CITY COUNCIL
June 24, 2013

COUNCILLOR CHEUNG

ORDERED: That the City Manager be and hereby is requested to work with the members of the Food and Fitness Policy Council subcommittee most relevant to addressing questions related to urban agriculture on creating an urban agriculture task force that includes members of the Food and Fitness Policy Council as well as persons currently engaged in urban agriculture initiatives; and be it further

ORDERED: That the City Manager be and hereby is requested to instruct the Assistant City Manager for Community Development to review the Somerville and Boston Ordinances on urban agriculture with the aforementioned task force and report back on a timeline and process for developing a proposal for an urban agriculture ordinance in Cambridge.

In City Council June 24, 2013
Adopted by the affirmative vote of nine members.
Attest:- Donna P. Lopez, City Clerk

A true copy;

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Donna P. Lopez".

ATTEST:-

Donna P. Lopez, City Clerk

City of Cambridge

HEALTH & ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE MEMBERS

*Councillor Leland Cheung, Chair
Councillor Dennis Carlone
Councillor Nadeem Mazen
Councillor Marc McGovern*

In City Council June 22, 2015

The Health and Environment Committee held a public hearing on June 2, 2015 at 3:04 P.M. in the Sullivan Chamber.

The purpose of the hearing was to discuss Urban Agriculture initiatives in the City of Cambridge and the creation of a regulatory environment that can foster the safe expansion of Urban Agriculture within the City limits.

Present at the hearing were Councillor Leland Cheung, Chair of the Committee, Councillor Dennis J. Carlone, Councillor Nadeem A. Mazen, Councillor Marc C. McGovern, Councillor Craig Kelley, Lisa Peterson, Deputy City Manager, Iram Farooq, Acting Assistant City Manager for Community Development Department (CDD), Stuart Dash, Director of Community Planning, CDD, Elaine Thorne, Neighborhood Planner, CDD, Jennifer Letourneau, Director, Conservation Commission, Sam Lipson, Director of Environmental Health, Cambridge Public Health Department, Dawn B. Olcott, School and Community Nutritionist, Cambridge Public Health Department, Christian Schlachte, Aide to Councillor Cheung and City Clerk Donna P. Lopez.

Also present were Marie Mercurio, Urban Agriculture, City of Boston, Khrysti Smyth, Dorchester, Adrian Roman, Cynthia Santiago, Jennifer Rushlaw, Steven Gonzalez, Sandra Fairbank and James Williamson, 1000 Jackson Place.

Councillor Cheung convened the hearing and explained the purpose. In the last term urban agriculture was reviewed. He stated that Somerville's regulations were reviewed. Now there is more information on urban gardening, micro greens and hydroponics. He stated that Boston has adopted an Urban Agricultural Zoning Ordinance so Cambridge wants to see what an Urban Agriculture ordinance would look like. He also stated that there has been a Beekeeping Ordinance proposed.

Councillor Cheung introduced Marie Mercurio, a planner at the Boston Redevelopment Authority. She explained the process that Boston followed with the Urban Agriculture. She had a PowerPoint presentation (**ATTACHMENT A**). She stated that Urban Agriculture was not covered under Boston's Zoning Ordinance. Ms. Merino pushed for the Urban Agriculture Ordinance and the Boston Redevelopment Authority wrote the ordinance. In 2012 there was citywide overlay for Urban Agriculture. She stated that Article 89 was created (**ATTACHMENT B**). The Somerville ordinance was reviewed. She stated Will Allen came and spoke and she was motivated. A working group was formed which met once a month. A draft of Article 89 was prepared and brought to the neighborhoods for their input. This took about 1.5 years. Article 89 does not cover hens and bees. Urban Agriculture is not backyard gardening and community gardens are not included. She noted that Urban Agriculture must include a transaction. Farms are allowed as of right up to one acre and roof top farming is allowed up to 500 square feet. Comprehensive farm review kicks in at 10,000 square feet and must come to the Boston Redevelopment Authority for review. She explained that two comprehensive farm reviews have been done in Dorchester since Article 89 was enacted. There are other components of the permitting process

other than the comprehensive farm review. Composting must be enclosed in a bin per fire regulation. The Boston Redevelopment Authority suggested the raised bed method for the soil safety. Article 89 addresses farmers markets. There was concern about farming in residential districts. A farm stand must be in an Urban Agriculture area up to 700 square feet. Hens and bees were addressed in the previous zoning. Boston as 24+ neighborhoods that have their own zoning code and all of these need to be amended. Article 89 cannot trump the local neighborhood ordinances unless the local ordinances are amended to allow the keeping of animals. Article 89 proposed hen and bee conditions. She explained aquaculture is the growth of fish and it was more restrictive in zoning. Boston has a food Initiative Office which provides support on food types of issues. She stated that an urb.ag Application was created. The Conservation Law Foundation helped with the language for Article 89.

Councillor Cheung asked how different Boston's ordinance is from Somerville's. Ms. Mercurio responded that Boston's ordinance is more restrictive especially with the animal piece. There are no major differences in the ideology.

Councillor McGovern stated that he did not know much about bees until he worked with people who know about bees. He asked about the maximum number of 2 for hives. Ms. Mercurio stated that the average parcels was looked at and in Boston it is 35,000 square feet. A backup is needed for one and if you have 2 you need more space. If more than 2 were wanted a variance would be required. Councillor McGovern asked about letting the community know they are keeping bees. Ms. Mercurio stated that when there is a formal beekeeping ordinance established a special permit will be required by Inspectional Service. She stated that the beekeeping ordinance is ready to go. She stated that there is a live fowl license required in Boston. She stated today a resident received a BZA permit for 6 hens in West Roxbury.

Councillor Mäzen commented that between Somerville and Boston much can be learned. He stated that he hoped that Cambridge can do better. He noted that beekeeping is more important than he realized. There are former beekeepers in hiding. Resident allowances for hydroponics, aquaponics and the local growing will be important to cities in the future. He asked how people get started. Ms. Mercurio stated that the Boston Redevelopment Authority does not help with startups. She stated that she refers people to Mayor's Office on Food Initiative. She stated that there is such a push for gardening. Councillor Mäzen asked if this should be an ordinance change to identify the lowest hanging fruit and kits. Ms. Mercurio stated that Boston started the Urban Agriculture visioning that discusses networks, metrics and funding.

Councillor Carlone asked how long did the zoning effort take. Ms. Mercurio responded two years and the only element was the keeping of animals. Boston had a clean slate. Boston built on other communities and best practices. Councillor Carlone commented that 35,000 square feet is an average parcel in Boston and Cambridge's parcels will be simple.

Councillor Kelley stated that this was an interesting proposal. This is driven by where density is allowed. Bees are especially challenging. Ms. Mercurio stated that having bees and hens requires going through the BZA but has the backing of Article 89.

Councillor Carlone asked Ms. Mercurio to explain the logic that the setback for beehives is five feet. Ms. Mercurio explained that this is what is used as a setback for accessory uses. Councillor Carlone asked why this works. Ms. Mercurio stated that if the bees are not maintain they swam. It is incumbent on the beekeeper to maintain the hive. Councillor McGovern stated that there are no beekeeping regulations in Cambridge. There is a science to beekeeping. He stated that when bees swarm that is when they are docile. He stated that education is needed about this.

Councillor Cheung asked if the farm stands are in residential areas. Ms. Mercurio did not know. She noted that the Boston Redevelopment Authority does not do the permitting. Councillor Cheung stated that the next steps are to post online documents and to get ideas from Cambridge residents and copies from Boston. The documents can be found at the following link: <http://www.lelandcheung.com/urbanag> He asked can someone plant a roof top garden. Ms. Mercurio stated that a rooftop garden must be permitted. She spoke about abutter nuisances that this could create.

At 3:52 PM Councillor Cheung opened public comment.

Khrysti Smyth, Yardwork's, stated that she helped write the Somerville Ordinance. She stated that the difference between the Somerville Ordinance and the Boston Ordinances is that Somerville deals with the residential aspect; Boston with the commercial. Somerville does allow sale of produce from residential gardens.

Jennifer Rushlow stated that the Conservation Law Foundation is providing assistance to the city around the zoning ordinance. They helped residents to understand the ordinance and helps with best practices.

James Williamson, 1000 Jackson Place, spoke about public housing development. He asked on what extend can we building in Cambridge and have these nice wall gardens. This has to be tied to master planning. He spoke about a community garden in Boston which is vibrant. Rendezvous in Central Square had a herb garden on the roof and may have some experience. He had nothing to add about chickens and bees. He stated that CHA residents who have been asking for community garden spaces in collaboration with CHA and have been rebuffed. He stated that the opportunity on CHA land is many. This should be rethought about CHA residents having a resident community garden. CHA has stated that it has to be a raised bed.

George Mokay 218 Franklin Street, stated that the Boston Redevelopment Authority has been regional. He stated that 50 percent of agriculture is grown in the city. He stated that globally, nationally and locally should be considered by Cambridge. He spoke about the high tech controlled environment for agriculture. These techniques are becoming economically feasible. He stated that a family in Somerville is growing seedlings. It is getting harder to purchase seedlings. He stated that good money can be made by growing seedlings. It is important to cultivate compost to do Urban Agriculture. He spoke about methods by taking carbon out of the atmosphere and putting it into the soil. There is a huge opportunity to do Urban Agriculture. He stated that City Sprouts are in the elementary schools. Since 1970 Urban Agriculture has been rebuilt in MA and it can be fruitful.

Leray Minc, 46 Linnaean Street, asked what the process is in Boston for city growers for land transition to farmers so that people can learn about agriculture. Ms. Mercurio stated that there are two farms in Boston that are land leases and two since adoption of Article 89 have been disposed for farms. The Boston Redevelopment Authority is interested in developing land.

James Williamson spoke about farm aid in Somerville that has a network and greenhorns.

Councillor Cheung closed public comment at 4:12 PM.

Councillor McGovern stated that City Spouts is working farming into the school curriculum.

Deputy City Manager Peterson stated that Cambridge is ready to begin the next round of participatory budgeting. She suggested community gardening and supplies for the gardening. There is much that can be done about food production.

Mr. Dash stated that the committee has discussed bees and chickens and the Boston zoning ordinance. Other communities are been reviewed as to what they do. He spoke about income equity issues, pesticides and lead. He stated that CDD is working with the Health Department and City Sprouts. He spoke about the future water use for better outcomes. He stated that the Avian Flu transmitted by chicken is also discussed.

Dawn Olcott, Cambridge Public Health Department, which promotes healthy living and the Urban Agriculture is a good fit with the Community Health Improvement Plan. Health Food is one of the four priority areas for the City. She stated that the Senior Center has a raised bed herb garden that the DPH has helped with. When a food ordinance is passed in Cambridge it would be enforced by DPH. She submitted

her comments (**ATTACHMENT C**).

Councillor Cheung thanked all those present for their attendance and reiterated that he would make draft zoning available at: <http://www.lelandcheung.com/urbanag>.

The hearing adjourned at 4:21 P.M.

For the Committee,

Councillor Leland Cheung, Chair
Health and Environment Committee

Attachment