



CITY OF SOMERVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS

CLERK OF COMMITTEES

May 17, 2012

REPORT OF THE LAND USE COMMITTEE

Attendee Name	Title	Status	Arrived
William A. White Jr.	Chair	Present	
Tony Lafuente	Vice Chair	Present	
Sean T. O'Donovan	Ward Five Alderman	Present	
Thomas F. Taylor	Ward Three Alderman	Present	
Kevin Prior	Planning Board Chairman	Present	
Joseph Favalaro	Planning Board Member	Present	
James Kirylo	Planning Board Member	Present	
Elizabeth Moroney	Planning Board Member	Present	
Michael Capuano	Planning Board Member	Present	
Joseph Curtatone	Mayor	Present	
George Proakis	Director of Planning	Present	

- **Public Hearing: Urban Agriculture Ordinance**

Mayor Curtatone spoke about this ordinance and explained that no other city or town in Massachusetts has an ordinance dealing with urban agriculture and said that he views this as an opportunity for Somerville to be a national leader in this area. The proposed ordinance would essentially set regulations for farming on private and municipal land as well as for bee keeping and backyard poultry raising. Urban agriculture would provide an increased supply of wholesome fresh foods, revitalize and preserve open space, create economic opportunity and reduce the need for the use of fossil fuels.

The ordinance is being put forth because there are no clear guidelines or established health regulations for home agriculture and because there is no authorization for farming on public land. The categories covered by the proposal include home agriculture, community farming, farming on municipal land, commercial agriculture, beekeeping and backyard poultry raising. Mr. Proakis noted that the proposed ordinance is not intended to interfere with individuals who garden for their own use unless the crop is being sold.

Several residents spoke in favor of the proposal, applauding the city for taking this step. Among the comments made were:

- stores could buy from local growers if the farming was regulated
- local gardening and poultry raising builds social capital
- increases the supply of fresh produce and eggs

- this would help in reducing the backlog of individuals waiting for community gardening space
- creates opportunities for youths to learn about gardening and chickens

Chairman White asked whether there were health issues pertaining to the growth of crops for consumption on soil in Somerville that may be contaminated by lead. Mr. Proakis stated that there will be testing requirements for those who sell products. Home owners who are concerned also can do testing at a reasonable fee. Chairman White asked Mr. Proakis to see if some spot testing can be done on soil from properties owned by the City of Somerville to at least get a feel for contamination levels. Alderman Lafuente questioned Mr. Proakis about the potential danger of rodents using some of the byproducts of agricultural use as food sources and Mr. Proakis said that the Board of Health would enact regulations. Chairman White asked that the regulations be forwarded to the Committee. The Land Use Committee will keep the record open on this item until the close of business on June 8, 2012, to receive additional written comments.

192922 - Requesting approval of a Zoning Ordinance to encourage urban agriculture by adding definitions and amending the table of uses and its footnotes to allow farms as accessory residential uses, and to allow community gardens, community farms and farming on municipal land.:

RESULT:

KEPT IN COMMITTEE