



CITY OF CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS

PLANNING BOARD

CITY HALL ANNEX, 344 BROADWAY, CAMBRIDGE, MA 02139

Date: October 11, 2016

Subject: Urban Agriculture Zoning Petition

Recommendation: The Planning Board does NOT RECOMMEND adoption.

To the Honorable, the City Council,

On August 23, 2016, the Board held a hearing on this City Council zoning petition, which would create a new Section 22.80 in the Zoning Ordinance to establish zoning regulations of the operation and establishment of urban agriculture activities with necessary public safety measures and reduced impact on city residents.

There was no representation from the petitioner at the meeting. No other members of the public appeared to testify. The Board heard a presentation from city's Community Development Department regarding the ongoing efforts by Public Health Department and Community Development Department with the Urban Ag Task Force to develop a comprehensive urban agriculture policy for the city.

At this time, the Board finds merit in the working progress made by the Urban Ag Task Force with the support of city's Public Health Department and Community Development Department. The Board supports the task force's plan to have public regulations and permitting process in place prior to amendment of zoning ordinance to allow specific urban agriculture activities associated with keeping of chicken, beekeeping, and produce grown for sale.

However, the Board has several concerns about this proposal. The primary concern is that even though the petition has a draft policy with similar intent as that of the Urban Ag Task Force, there are some key differences in the proposed implementation. If the Council wished to consider allowing urban agriculture activities, there should be further in-depth review of the types of agriculture uses and in which districts they may be established in the city. Public health concerns are critical when considering the criteria and review processes for establishment and regulation of such uses.

In addition, Board members recommend creating public awareness about associated permit process, operation and maintenance requirements and best management practices. The Board understands the need to identify specific regulatory authority for specific agricultural use with regard to permit review, inspection schedule, and enforcement strategies.

In conclusion, while the Board is generally supportive of establishing urban agriculture use in the city, Board members believe that more consideration is needed to determine the specific regulatory process that would best serve clear permitting, guidance on establishment and operation, and efficient enforcement mechanisms for compliance. The Board strongly supports the development of the urban agriculture policy by the Urban Ag Task Force to address public health concerns and promote neighborhood support with guidance from the Council.

Respectfully submitted for the Planning Board,

H Theodore Cohen, Chair.