

7.14.15

Planning Commission

Re: Urban Ag proposal before the Commission 7/15/15

Have another meeting that was planned months before this one was announced so am writing in some of the objections to this draft.

As a grower of food and animals for over 40 years, am still maintaining that growing food is a right not to be given permission to do in this "great" country of USA. Victory Gardens during WWII helped to feed the nation and they did not ask permission or were given permission. It was the thing to do as supporting ones country both in the country and peoples yards.

We are coming into a similar crisis with food and water will be the limiting factor in all that. If person(s) want to be self sufficient and can find a way to do that economically (water being a big expense) then they should have the right to do that without asking permission of anyone (neighbors or city included).

So still believe these codes are unnecessary for people to grow their own food as well as doing little to actually relax city codes when it comes to animals in the city. In fact they appear to make more restrictions about animals by discouraging the use of larger animals which produce more. There are as well in the proposed codes, more arbitrary numbers for the keeping of how many animals (even lowering the amount from a set 24 max chickens to as little as 2 or 4 but limiting it to 36 even if one has a very large parcel and this all based on arbitrary units, one duck being the equal of 2 chickens, huh).

When it comes to animals complaints this is overkill in addressing the very few farm animal complaints which current codes already address.

The draft attempts to address many concerns the public expressed about the original draft proposals. In its own way has come worlds better then what it was from in its first proposal. The staff is to be commended for all that hard work.

It is grueling to go over these revisions time after time especially when many of these revisions are not needed to achieve encouraging people to grow their own food. They are instead a deterrent, a blockage, in the path to encourage people to be self sufficient.

Admire the work that Collette Altaffer went to create her own simplified version of the a new code. If one believes in a code, much is good in this simplified condensed version. There are some places that are based on lack of knowledge of animals. For instance, about ducks. They only need enough water to be able to wash their eyes out to remain healthy and they do not quack all day. In fact they are generally just as quiet or quieter then chickens. And they have the benefit of being more hardy in bad weather then chickens.

Another example, her regs for composting in limiting it to onsite waste shows another lack of knowledge of how to help bio-systems in gardens. In both versions of the city and Collette's one is mostly taking out

the component of how animals help in the fertilization of the soils by severely limiting animals numbers. Her version would prevent the Community Food Bank garden from being able to acquire and compost manure from outside sources. Animal manure adds a great deal to the composted nutrients which helps the soils stay fertile. Community Food Bank Committee Garden is huge and with only on site waste allowed over time the soil would become depleted, as many commercial farm soils have through the use of just chemical fertilizers. Nature recycles everything and animals are a part of that equation balancing and it is why they are so important as part of a farming or gardening operation.

Limiting the use of big machine during a day is also shortsighted as turning manure often to make compost faster is time consuming for just people with shovels or with Community Food Bank garden composing pile a huge task. Did like her requirement that the big equipment be screened when not in use as that was what some people in this neighborhood requested Community Food Bank to do and last looked they had not done.

Limiting butchering to indoors is so unrealistic. The actual gutting and cutting up can be done indoors but killing with the blood that is part of killing.....Perhaps she has never been to a slaughter house and seen the blood that is involved from a fresh kill. (Now do you all want to be vegans?)

There are a few other areas that would make adjustments in Collette's suggested code but perhaps that is not what is at the table right now.

There is however, much to be said for simplification of a code such as what Collette has put together so it is easy for people to read and understand.

Although can understand why the city folk would put such difficult to follow codes together as that is the blueprint they had to work with the current city codes.

In summary, a few adjustments to the City codes like removing or changing setbacks from 50' to 20 ft' and some minor height adjustments to the codes would have helped people to be in compliance with the current codes. There did not appear to be a need to make all these changes for people to be able to grow their own food.

Adding code layers only guarantees that people will have more ways of being out of compliance as anything not covered or is restricted causing unforeseen consequences makes it "illegal". Another enforcement nightmare and ways to make people criminals. If something has no law against it then the assumption is that it is ok to do it. So must we make codes about growing food to allow people to do what should be their right? Seems like growing food is a pretty peaceful positive activity. It is an activity that settled people have been doing for eons. Why this need to regulate it? To control people's access to safe foods?

There are enough codes on the books to deal with almost every concern these draft codes supposedly solve. As they stand now these draft Urban Ag codes should be dumped.

Beryl Baker, farmer, environmental activist