



## Oakland Urban Agriculture Community Meeting - July 21, 2011 Transcribed Comments

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The following comments were transcribed from the flip chart comments received at the Oakland Urban Agriculture Community Meeting that was held on July 21, 2011. If you feel that your comment was not transcribed correctly or not noted correctly, please send an e-mail with your correction to [hklein@oaklandnet.com](mailto:hklein@oaklandnet.com).

### GENERAL URBAN AGRICULTURE COMMENTS

- Animals are not 'local' – many are trucked in as chicks/bunnies and their feed comes from afar (more food miles and GHGs)
- If Oakland allows slaughter, it would be one of the few urban centers to do so, leading to lawsuits
- Ability to harvest/slaughter one's own meat is an individual rights issue and can be done safely and humanely. Do not jump to prohibition b/c of fear.
- Make some provision for building commissary kitchens at schools – could be a way to encourage bartering of farming services, e.g. swap highly skilled farming labor for use of inspected kitchen facilities
- Economic incentives for people to plant fruit/vegs instead of other plants
- Including animals in the food system is not healthy nor affordable (for city services)
- Please pass plant-based ag changes, take animals out of "food" discussion and form an animal welfare commission to seriously consider animal issues
- Commercial slaughter should not be allowed but individual residents should retain the right to raise and process animals for home consumption, which allows people to avoid acquiring meat via the factory farming system
- Concerned about introducing animal slaughter into our city b/c Oakland Animal Shelter does not have funds to regulate cats/dogs as it is and will be unable to handle problems relating to slaughter/animal raising
- Need to provide education so people know how to grow healthy food
- Residential property along the lines of public parks...how will this work?
- Zoning update should integrate city-owned parks into the regulations
- Very important to have education regarding the cost/work of raising animals
- Concerned about vacant properties in Oakland - Can Oakland provide some incentives to vacant lot owners to support urban ag projects?
- Concern that allowing animal slaughter may trigger nuisance lawsuits, which would cost the City and its public taxpayers
- Allow underserved communities to grow/consume/sell ag products that are grown on their own properties/comm. gardens – very important for new jobless immigrants, many have expertise in subsistence agriculture
- Save Oakland's historic produce market
- Business community expertise must be a part of any citywide food policy
- District associations would like to see produce market relocated to Oakland Army Base site



### **General Comments – continued**

- Identify a champion on council/planning commission to spearhead Urban Ag
- Will revenue from urban ag permits be returned to supporting farming efforts?
- Can vacant lots grow produce for school/city food programs?
- Simplify the soil testing process
- What educational partnerships are planned?
- Urban farms are a great opportunity for internships or apprenticeships for local youth via school programs
- 4H motto: learning by doing (great program for kids)
- Sharing/bartering food promotes sense of community
- Allows families to make personal food choices – freedom from Big Ag
- Urban farming creates a more sustainable yard for our family and neighbors – no lawnmowers Closed cycle: feed to chickens, who produce eggs and fertilizer
- Raises our lives to a higher degree of self sufficiency; increases sense of self
- Food builds community and friendships
- Diverts \$ from large corporations into local streams – higher accessibility to food, creates networks and personal connections
- What is Urban Farming?
  - Tool to fight childhood obesity
  - Tool to promote healthier eating for adults
  - Tool to promote active living
  - Organic in nature
  - Participants are from local community
  - Non-commercial
  - By the people, for the people
- Engage existing agencies: Ag Ext Agent, ag schools, research labs, suppliers with economic interests
- Encourage green waste reduction by composting
- Pesticides could only be allowed for raised beds or containers, not on original soil
- Encourage integrated pest management practices to discourage pesticides and provide education
- Equity across all areas (crops, pets, animals)
- Local growers should be encouraged to vend their produce to local restaurants so that a) more nutritious foods can be showcased at premier restaurants and b) Oakland cuisine can rise to national prominence (fresh)
- Food czar or task force or advisory group needed to supply momentum to process and keep it from becoming politicized or edged out by competing policy interest
- City should develop integrated pest management policies (w/Ag commissioner) to encourage use of least toxic pest mgmt (UC Davis and County extension)
- Collaborate with EBMUD to create water conservation practices, make rainwater/graywater more accessible
- Standards should be performance based rather than prescriptive
- Ensure that toxins/lead are not in produce or soil
- Work with Alameda County Lead Poisoning Prevention



### **General Comments – continued**

- Promote organic practices
- Odor/flies/feces control
- Animal husbandry works for our family as a compost system/cycle of egg production/sales, as well as 4H involvement for our children. Responsible flock management practices are followed.
- Lot size: backyard (small), corner lot (medium), vacant lot/city park/community garden (large) => different regs for each
- Require soil testing
- Define 'farm' – size, location, # of staff/volunteers, equipment, etc
- Create work for food opportunities and what kind of regulatory measures will impact that type of exchange

### **SALES**

- Bartering urban ag products for other food products or help in growing food products should not be considered selling and should be allowed without restriction
- Value-added goods should be allowed to be sold, using commercial kitchens and keeping with Health Dept codes. Use SF's ordinance as model language but allow in residential zones.
- Urban farmers should be permitted to sell produce and products where the food products are grown, up to a certain threshold in residential (and other) zones
- Provide health certification, education, and training as a part of any sales permit (minimum State standard)
- Sales of school garden produce should be allowed at schools or to be used for school food service
- Create certification process for sales of garden grown produce so it is legal to sell to local residents/businesses and other institutions
- Wholesale distributors should be allowed to purchase from local growers who are certified organic
- Supermarkets can allow stands within their internal produce areas and feature locally grown fruits and vegetables (typically, chains ship produce to distribution center where it is handled/reloaded before being sent to the store, which means it is older and sometimes bereft of nutritional value...also costs more in terms of food miles...often produce is picked early and ripens en-route (bad)
- Bartering of unprocessed produce should not be regulated
- Fruit stands/carts should be permitted in commercial areas, but should be subject to health inspections
- Concerned about lack of access to fresh food, not about sales/trades
- Notification/labeling could be required in a standardized place on booths/carts...information such as soil quality, raised beds, etc. (buyer beware)
- Make a distinction between people selling to for-profit businesses and people selling to senior homes or school (institutional)



### **Sales – continued**

- Selling homegrown products is a teaching/learning process on many levels for grade school children
- Storefront owner concerned about permitting...not fair if those who sell from home don't need a permit to sell
- Concerns about pesticides
- Identify the threshold before needing a business license
- Comments from residents should be weighted more strongly than those living outside Oakland borders
- If a chicken fence is straddling property lines, then what?
- Interest in pooling excess home-grown food to sell it collectively
- Want to talk about the city starting to regulate health issues and food safety
- Urban ag in city parks...push Parks/Rec Dept to do a master plan
- Selling eggs
- Pop up stores- How do we deal with temporary uses?
- Concerns about farmer's markets causing congestion (esp on Piedmont Ave)
- Create a different locale/situation where urban farmers can sell since there has been problems selling at a farmer's market
- Is it legal to sell on sidewalks/streets?
- Can animal products be sold at home? Concerns about safety relating to meat, animals, and eggs, salmonella
- Can tractors be used on larger parcels/lots?
- Do sellers (or buyers) need insurance? liability issues
- Neighborhoods could combine their products to sell at one communal stand
- Tax implications - No taxes under a certain threshold
- Allow value-added products to be sold as it increases the economic viability of urban agriculture
- Create a training curriculum for safe standard handling/processing of animal and plants raised for sale; require participation in training to sell legally (certification)

### **CROP GROWING**

- Free soil testing
- Organic only, no pesticides allowed
- Extra crops – could they be donated to a food bank
- Outright permit needs to be affordable to ALL neighborhoods
- City should have a list of permitted pesticides
- Spraying should not spill into neighbor's yards
- Control scale of pesticide use
- Fish bones can be used to detoxify soil
- Lead detoxing can be very expensive
- Work with Alameda County Lead Poisoning Prevention
- Bio-remediation education (such as using oyster mushrooms)
- Limit hours of equipment use



### **Crop Growing – continued**

- Education regarding low impact and high yield production
- What about communally owned land, such as YMCA
- Sheet mulching is preferable to plowing
- Recommend that community centers be allowed to raise crops without restrictions, similar to regs for single family homes
- Look to Bay-Friendly model Municipal Ordinance for operating standards (<http://bayfriendlycoalition.org/ModelPoliciesOrdinances.shtml>)
- Encourage bee keeping
- Lead is an important issue when it comes to root based plants
- If produce is sold, some sort of notice/documentation regarding growing process
- Ecology Center has a database of referrals
- Help to link together current grassroots networks
- Offer community workshops on growing techniques
- Other options to raised beds such as permaculture are more ecologically sound
- Public information on where crop raising is permitted/happening
- Encourage crop growing in public parks
- City-operated Garden tool lending facility
- Free composting – Where can you go to get manure?
- Encourage libraries to have community gardens
- How would indoor container gardens be regulated/permitted (residential hotel)?
- Oakland should be an innovator and leader for the country. Make it easy to grow, limit regulation
- Educate residents about how to grow organic
- How can we help Homeowner Associations to allow crop raising (changing HOA covenants) and prevent future prohibitions?
- How to check soil toxicity? Promote knowledge and access to soil testing
- Make detoxification processes/info more readily available
- Composting system similar to Berkeley
- Baseline info available when growing in toxic locations
- Water access for community gardens
- Empty lot guerilla gardening
- Promote equity/even handed approach
- Remove barriers to using unused land for agriculture
- Graywater irrigation for crops

### **URBAN FARM MANAGEMENT**

- Soil testing (lead/arsenic)
- Full testing => PH and health soil
- Legal issues/structure for ownership of different property types
- Land use issues => right to farm city land if not harming
- Water quality, safety
- Water rights for urban farmers



### **Urban Farm Management- continued**

- Remediation standards (Steve Calanog from EPA)
- Against mailing animals (chicks/bunnies)
- Nitrogen-fixing plants
- Predator- and escape-proof enclosures
- Secure compost bins and feed
- Wildlife management practices
- Efficient water use, controlled run-off
- Noise complaints stemming from health issues, no local livestock vets
- Tool lending library/helpline
- Mentoring, informational booths, permaculture – can City make available? Parks and Rec employee could manage
- Standards for urban ag VS urban ag for sale
- Full food system does not need to include animals
- Addressing animal waste as compost
- Selection process and follow up for those using city property for agriculture
- Identify existing systems for dealing with animal compost
- Regulations needed for fertilizers, pest control, herbicides
- Enforcement
- Diversity/awareness around animal slaughter (religion)
- Focus on complete system – interplay btw animals and plants in terms of fertilizers and pollination
- Find the right place on the spectrum btw prohibition and regulation
- Roosters should be legal if they can be kept quiet until 10am (Berkeley’s new regulation)
- Legality of seed saving (copyrighted seeds)
- Toxic soil – renter vs owner, \$\$ for remediation
- Linkage btw animal slaughter and violence in the community
- Goats => buck for studing
- Require a class for residents interested in urban ag – create certification system for teaching the classes
- Require to disclose publicly on rent lease whether soil has been tested
- Over a certain scale of farming, require a sanitation plan, irrigation plan, disposal plan, etc
- Longevity of gardens
- Maximize space using permaculture
- Use animal manure to feed worm compost
- Use of urine as fertilizer
- Bees are already sufficiently regulated under nuisance ords and state law (check Albany or El Cerrito)
- Promote forage crops for bees
- Permit process for urban ag should include revocation regs
- Community review process for dealing with complaints
- How to formalize the process to use vacant lots for ag?
- All about SCALE – size of lot, number of animals
- Integrated systems of animals => total compost





### **Urban Farm Management- continued**

- Fly predators for fly control

### **ANIMAL HUSBANDRY, APIARIES, AQUAPONICS**

- Will animal regulations include raising? How to kill, dispose of leftover?
- Why regulate? Why not ask if we want animals at all...
- Are you advocating home use or sale? Possible to distinguish btw home + commercial
- Protecting animals is in Oakland's history – we don't want animals to be killed in the City...concerned about:
  - Enforcement of animal standards...will neighbors have to watch
  - Animal health/treatment
  - Funding of process/enforcement, budget issues
- Animal rescue community is very concerned about potential for mistreatment, concern over the safety of home-grown meat
- Some confusion, will Planning turn over reg/enforcement to Animal Control
- Respect for others and their opinions is important in this process
- Responsible animal husbandry folks are also appalled by animal mistreatment
- Education before beginning to raise animals is very important
- De-linking from industrial/factory meat production is good and should be supported (raising good/healthy protein sources)
- Promote local businesses moving away from industrial meat production
- 4-H history can be 'renewed' to respectfully raise animals for food
- Regs should stress humane killing
- Concerns about violence in general, what if children see killing? Could lead to divisiveness between neighbors
- Slaughtering doesn't have to be horrible...many do it
- Worries about dealing with neighbor killings/odor/sounds
- ECAP – Energy Climate Action Plan – sets aggressive goals in terms of producing food locally, healthily, resiliently – recommends planting a garden
- Livestock are not = to pets; very different
- Choice of meat is more varied than from factory farms
- Over 10% of food costs are due to transportation/food miles
- New survey of animal raisers – those who raise livestock generally eat less meat
- Raising livestock is my choice to have control over my food and its quality
- Let's not make this a debate about telling people to stop eating meat
- Less 'efficient' to grow meat, so against Oakland policy
- "Homesteaders" create a sense of community, playing w/animals
- Odor and noise can be mostly controlled
- Finding a balance between individual rights and animal concerns
- Controls are in place to prevent the worst abuses
- Would like to see a set of guidelines that experts agree could facilitate animals
- ACEH – could be burdened by increased husbandry



### **Animal Husbandry, Apiaries, Aquaponics- continued**

- Could we create/write an informational booklet, generated by community input, which would teach others about safe/clean options for slaughtering and raising animals?
- How much can you grow? How much space is recommended for that amount? Will there be specific guidelines for farmers?
- Keep fees reasonable
- Perhaps there would be a community vote when farmers are given permits for raising animals
- Would rather individuals are not given permits per se, then it becomes hard to revoke
- Make sure animal rights and raising issues are treated under the same Urban Ag umbrella
- We don't want to pay a fee
- How long will this process take? Please keep the public updated/informed
- \$2500 is too much for personal/home-scale urban ag
- Fee to inspect a farming site should be >\$250
- Use animal fertilizers or organics – lets not import anything
- According to recent practitioner survey, Oaklanders are generally raising only a few animals per home
- Seattle regulated roosters b/c of excessive noise
- Berkeley allowed roosters, regulated via existing nuisance/noise ordinances
- Will licenses be required for raising animals? Scale-dependent
- Permit fees do not go into general fund, but towards processing/developing ag guidelines
- How will we address shared lots/yards? Distinguish this from a business
- Small farms could remain totally unregulated
- Biofuel oasis would volunteer to serve in an advisory capacity
- Oakland needs to conduct a serious educational process, sharing Best Practices
- Distinguish btw growing for personal use and commercial use
- Performance-based standards – not purely the number of animals but the number/frequency of nuisances
- Hard for the city to judge one's farming ability...could community judge
- False fears relating to bee-keeping; they typically fly solo
- City does not have a good count of the total # of animals...need a survey
- Technical Advisory group has been formed
- Try to keep regulation to a minimum, esp for small scale farms
- Dwarf goats should be treated differently than regular sized goats
- Health & Safety relating to slaughtering – need to ensure proper practices, and coordinate with County authorities
- Roosters should be legal if they can be keep quiet until 10am
- Slaughtering for sale (no) vs personal
- Meat processing is often the cause of contamination, not the slaughtering
- Human vs pet food consumption of homegrown meat (USDA regulates)
- Liability for bee allergies/stings - Are beekeepers required to talk to neighbors, how many?
- Concern about proliferating livestock at the Oakland Animal Shelter (euthanasia)





### **Animal Husbandry, Apiaries, Aquaponics- continued**

- How can we properly enforce animal regulations, what will this cost?
- Allowing meat sales will lead to more animal-related problems and nuisances
- OAS ends up with animal overflow (20 rabbits ex) and has no budget to deal with
- How could regulating make problems worse?
- Animal raising cuts across many cultural and economic boundaries
- Eating too much meat is unhealthy, period
- More animals will necessarily lead to more problems w/abuse
- Interactions btw plants and animals are key
- Taking “control” of food production
- Locally farmed vs factory farmed....dichotomy
- Most local farming/husbandry is organic
- Is backyard husbandry more humane than industrial slaughter?
- Not enough arable land within City limits to feed everyone, esp if you raise animals for meat (feed intensive)
- Animals/humans are not in competition for all food sources, waste/compost streams are useful
- Freedom to grow what you want
- Urban livestock attracts rats, pests, and wild animals/predators
- Habitat conflict with wild creatures
- Will need a coordinated effort with Animal Control
- Silent majority in favor of animal raising
- Protecting rights of minorities
- Religious practices relating to meat should be respected

### **PUBLIC SPEAKERS COMMENTS**

- Oakland Food Policy (Aaron) – involved in food distribution
  - Define Urban Ag as inclusive of animals and crops
  - Backyard slaughter is not appropriate
  - Allow on-site sales in all locations
  - Insure an affordable and timely permit process
  - Insure community access to public lands
  - Set clear standards for procedures
  - Agriculture training toolkit
- Esperanza Pallana- Let’s avoid making this a debate about meat eating, concerns about humane treatment of animals, keep permits affordable, most Oakland homes have only a handful of animals, by developing regulations for animals we would lessen the burden on City staff
- Including animals in the food system is not helpful to producing food – since meat/animals is more feed intensive, it is more *efficient* to grow plants only
- Animal issues are not easily enforceable so it would be additional work to regulate and oversee
- Save the Oakland historic Produce Market



### **Public Speaker Comments- continued**

- Daniel Miller (Food Security Group) – not just about regulating but more importantly about supporting fresh food, making neighborhoods safer, connects the young and the old to food sources, increases food choices, gives under resourced people's access to food, city should encourage food health and not overregulate, egg quality is better from those that eat insects
- Jennifer (BioDiesel Oasis) – at the biofuel station they sell chicken feed and teach classes, bees are really popular right now b/c people want to prevent Colony Collapse Disorder from spreading, urban areas have lots of food for bees; she keeps chicken for eggs herself and shows customers how to grow ecologically
- Kao (Beekeeping Assoc) – urban gardens in Seattle really helped to revitalize neighborhoods....certain flowers/plants are really beneficial for bees (organic white mustard, alfalfa, etc)
- Shane River (4-H parent) – farming/animal raising helps teach her children where food comes from and about the system as a whole
- Lawrence (Neighborhood Vegetable) – his organization volunteers to help people set up their own gardens, hold garden work parties
- City can serve as an amazing resources through web-based community mapping...vacant parcels, community gardens, educational events, tool sharing
  - GIS will help democratize information so people can ACT in their own neighborhoods

### **WRITTEN COMMENT CARDS**

- Roosters – Highly recommend policies be formulated around noise related issues and not the sex of the chicken
- Let it grow...encourage organic...allow sales
- For sales (or donation): mandatory soil testing, mandatory basic class on composting/erosion/food safety (conditions for receiving permit)  
Permit cost should be proportional to expected sales gross (1<sup>st</sup> yr) or previous year sales gross
- Talking about animals in 'urban ag' is contradictory with the City's original mandate (allow for access to healthful foods)...bifurcate the proposal into crops and more controversial animals
- Need help turning vacant/abandoned lots into garden rather than allowing developers to get the land....but it costs 10,000\$ to hook up water to a vacant lot, so we need the City's help to increase food security (unlimited gardens). Prison population should be gardening, as well as Alameda City Food Bank.
- Consider farming the same as a garage sale – allow sales of excess food & goods
- Animals/livestock should be considered separately; opposed to backyard slaughter based on noise, odor, diseases. Profession of planning is based on the distinctions btw residential and agricultural uses. Fully support urban gardening and hope it can move forward w/o contentious animal issue included.



### **Written Comment Cards- continued**

- Would like to start a storefront, what does it take for others to come sell to me? And for me to be able to sell?
- \$2500 is too much for home-scale ag permit
- No CUPs for urban ag in public parks, need to eliminate the fee for public spaces
- Oakland needs more goats – zoning update should be clear about goats and should make it easy/cheap to keep them – "Every neighborhood in Oakland could be improved with goats"
- Exec Director of East Bay SPCA is interested to participating in the process (Allison Lindqvist)
- Neglect and abuse will go up among these livestock animals – bad
- Support community organizations like Neighborhood Vegetables that have been organizing garden/work parties. They have mentors and a list of 2000 party goers who are willing to raise a garden each weekend at private residences or common spaces in exchange for potluck meals...how can we partner up with the city?
- Major concern is the large # of vacant parcels in Oakland (esp abandoned lots due to defaults by Oak Community Housing)...the city needs to look at these blighted properties and support neighbor efforts to turn them into farms
- Need to be classes dealing with different aspects of urban ag
- All crops grown should be organic – would reduce run-off.
- Regulation on noises relating to equipment may be needed
- Its important to realize the significance of the sense of initiative and self-determination that has created the ag/sustainability movement. Lets encourage community building efforts and allow individuals to self-regulate to the extent possible
- Urban farmers should not be held to a higher standard than lawnmowers, dog owners, and leaf blowers etc (CUP seems far too excessive)
- How can city facilitate access to: gardening tools, less harmful pest mgmt strategies, soil testing, better seeds, educational resources/mentors, community orgs, city land as a commons (common good)
- Possible to create limited liability clause or indemnification for beekeepers? Community members could falsely lay blame for a bee sting/allergic reaction...afraid of being blamed for a bee that is not hers
- Create pollinator-friendly areas in city parks (native pollinators) – instead of lawns/non flowering hedges, parks could be bee-utiful with native flowering plants that are drought tolerant...
- Should be no restrictions on people sharing food with friends/neighbors or charitable groups
- Bartering urban ag products should not be considered the same as selling, esp when food is traded for work (e.g. produce traded for gardening hours, or honey for eggs swap)
- Don't want more animals being slaughtered in the city, we don't need more violence. Concerned about spread of disease. Health of pets? Outbreak of swine flu could lead to pet euthanasia? Could the City prevent an epidemic? Would it fall to a neighbor to enforce humane slaughtering practices?



**Written Comment Cards- continued**

- Alameda County Master Gardener – commendable to bring back food production rights (taken away when food became a commodity). Very important to include animal husbandry, since ecosystems depend on many actors and animals bring plant biomass into the food cycle. Cruel to deny hungry ppl access to humanely raised eggs/milk/meat.