

BY EMAIL

Monday, November 18, 2019

City of London City Planning Department
Attn: Chuck Parker, Gregg Barrett and John Fleming
206 Dundas Street
London ON N6A 1G7

Re: Zoning By-Law Amendment, File Z-9060 (Farm Gate Sales on lands within Urban Growth Boundary) and File Z-9111 (Farm Gate Sales at 21 Norlan Avenue)

As a newly appointed member of the Agricultural Advisory Committee for the City of London, I received a copy of the report to the Planning and Environment Committee on the proposed Zoning By-law Amendment for Farm Gate Sales on lands within the Urban Growth Boundary (File Z-9060) together with the Notice of Public Meeting for this application and the associated application to permit Farm Gate Sales at 21 Norlan Avenue (File Z-9111). As the draft definition for “Farm Gate Sales” and/or the proposed wording of the ZBA amendment(s) were not available at the time of the September AAC meeting and the Agricultural Advisory Committee is not scheduled to meet until Wednesday, November 20th, individual members were encouraged to review the Planning Report when available and submit comments for tonight’s Public Meeting.

In addition to the Planning Report, I reviewed the public submissions on the PEC agenda and the goals and objectives of London’s Urban Agriculture Strategy. Last Tuesday evening, I also attended the London Environmental Network workshop on Urban Agriculture. Gregg Barrett as the Manager, Long Range Planning and Sustainability was a featured speaker at this City-sponsored event. Mr. Barrett’s presentation outlined the many ways that the City, its Urban Agriculture Steering Committee and the community-at-large are implementing the recommendations adopted by Council in its Urban Agriculture Strategy.

The City of London should be proud of the many efforts being made to provide opportunities for residents and businesses to access local food. London, with a large agricultural area within its boundaries, is uniquely positioned as a City to support both traditional forms of large-scale agricultural/agri-food operations aimed at the global marketplace and the emerging trend toward small-scale locally-focussed food production. The existing definitions of “Farm Market” and “Farm Food and Products Market” applied in the Agricultural zones (AG1 and AG2) are forward-thinking and in keeping with agri-food as an on-farm diversified use within the agricultural area.

The proposed addition of a new definition of “Farm Gate Sales” includes a clarification that the operator does not necessarily need to be an owner which would help to facilitate opportunities, particularly on developer-held lands or remnant farm parcels in the urban fringe. The addition of this new use in the Urban Reserve (UR) zone is a step in the right direction to expand the ability to use lands-awaiting-development for local food production **and sales**. ***For this reason, I support Application Z-9060.***

However, as the Planning Report notes, there are more potential opportunities for the direct-sale of locally produced food within the built boundary where most City residents live. It was good to read that City staff will continue working with the Urban Agriculture Steering Committee, the Middlesex London Food Policy Council and others to support their efforts to make easy access to fresh local food a priority here in London.

In relation to the upcoming meeting for 21 Norlan Avenue, I support this application but understand that the activities of Urban Roots go beyond Farm Gate Sales, including various opportunities for hands-on experiences, education and occasional food-focussed community gatherings. Connections formed at the farm gate at 21 Norlan and elsewhere are about more than just buying food. It's about meeting the people who grow your food, learning how to grow, getting tips on how to prepare meals and sharing in the harvest. ***I suggest that that the definition for the site-specific amendment (and possibly the Farm Gate Sales in Urban Reserve ZBA) be double checked to ensure that this definition would not limit food literacy and similar activities deemed accessory to farm gate sales, or alternatively that these types of activities would be permitted through other City policies.***

Finally, the City of London is encouraged to continue the implementation of its Urban Agriculture Strategy, including the support of activities within the built-up area, through the removal of any barriers to worthy community-based opportunities as they come to the attention of City Council, its various committees and staff.

As a member of AAC, thank you for the opportunity to comment.

Eleanor J. Rath