

Debra Thompson

From: Farragut Farm <farragutfarm@gmail.com>
Sent: Monday, November 05, 2018 6:14 AM
To: Debra Thompson
Subject: comments for today's borough assembly meeting

Hi Debbie,

Can you please read/submit the following for me during the public comment period at this afternoon's meeting? Thank you!

My name is Marja Smets and I am writing on behalf of myself and my business -- Farragut Farm. We would like to offer feedback on the proposed zoning changes, specifically regarding Market Gardens Special Use Standards. We are happy and grateful that Petersburg wants to encourage local food production by providing room for food production within city limits. Farming is by no means a lucrative business, and growing food in Southeast Alaska is not an easy or straightforward task given the challenges presented by climate, geography, and cost of transportation. If we want to see more food being produced locally, then we need to remove as many barriers as possible for aspiring farmers in our region. By supporting small farmers, we bolster economic development within our community and create more opportunity for Petersburg residents to eat fresh & nutritious food.

As the code is currently written, it would only be permissible for someone to establish a "market garden" that is less than 10,000 square feet on downtown commercial, general commercial, and rural residential plots. We would like to propose that the wording be changed to also include low, medium, and high density residential zones to this allowance. Currently there are very few in-town vacant lots available that are both commercially zoned and suitable for a small "market garden" or farm, which essentially forces all new potential operations to be located out the road. We would like to see the opportunity for market gardens to be established within city limits, so families can be personally connected to where their food is grown by walking by on their way to school or when they are out for a walk with their dog.

It should be noted that a "market garden" has to meet special use standards, which put limits on noise, fumes and visual impacts in residential zones, making sure the operation is compatible with neighborhood character. A "market garden" would also likely have the need to connect to the power and water systems, providing regular income for Petersburg utilities, just as if a new house were built on the same lot.

Again, we are asking to change the proposed code language so that "market gardens" of 10,000 square feet or less are permitted on ALL classifications of residential zoning, rather than just rural residential. That means that "market gardens" greater than 10,000 square feet would continue to only be allowed on general commercial lots with special use standards, and rural residential & downtown commercial lots with special use standards as well as a conditional use permit.

Let's take a step towards promoting local food production in Petersburg by opening the door as wide as possible to potential market gardeners. Our community will be better fed because of it!

Sincerely,
Marja Smets

Debra Thompson

From: Farragut Farm <farragutfarm@gmail.com>
Sent: Monday, November 05, 2018 7:56 AM
To: Debra Thompson
Subject: Comments for todays assembly meeting

Hi Debbie,

Would it be possible for you to read this at today's assembly meeting? Sorry for the short notice but things have been busy lately...

This comment was submitted by Bo Varsano who wrote it representing himself and his business, Farragut Farm.

I am very appreciative of the consideration given to market gardening in the new Petersburg Development Code. Overall the code's wording around this issue provides a lot of support for micro scale farming in our borough but by limiting market gardens only to areas zoned as commercial and rural residential, the new code would , in practical application, push all market gardening out of Petersburg's core area.

There is a growing trend nation wide for small micro farms to be located in the midst of residential neighborhoods very similar to those found in Petersburg. These tiny market gardens are often placed in residential yards and frequently urban "farmers" lease several yards from the various owners to patch together enough land to make a viable business. A location amidst a densely populated area has numerous benefits both to the operator and the surrounding neighborhood. The grower has a highly accessible presence that allows for making strong connections with the farm's customer base. Market gardens are often visually attractive, provide a little neighborhood diversity, are generally much more quietly maintained than a lawn and give the neighborhood's residents (especially the kids) direct exposure to the interesting and educational process of growing vegetables.

I landed my first job at age 10 picking blueberries at a local farm. I could ride my bike there and work as long as I liked. At a nickel a pint , I didn't get rich picking blueberries but the lessons learned about work ethics, independence and responsibility have lasted a lifetime. If the farm had been far from home this invaluable experience would not have been available. These days keeping our kids exposed to and engaged in constructive activities close to home is more important than ever.

By limiting market gardens to commercial and rural areas everyone in high, medium and low density residential zones is denied the opportunity to make a few bucks growing something adjacent to their residence or on their vacant lot. What about the retired folks who want to put a you-pick raspberry patch in their back yard? The stay at home parent who wants to put up a greenhouse and gain a little income selling lettuce to the school lunch program? The ambitious commercial grower who's business plan doesn't pencil out if they are forced to purchase an expensive commercial lot for their greenhouse based salad greens operation? I'm not saying there is a lot of this happening right now but wouldn't Petersburg be a better place to live if these

businesses were allowed to develop in the future? As it is currently written the development code would make all of these examples impractical or disallowed.

I urge the Borough Assembly to amend the development code to allow for market gardening in low, medium and high density residential areas.

Thanks for your time and consideration of my opinion.

Bo Varsano

My name is Mary Koppes and I am representing myself. Though I never thought I'd say such a thing, I am really excited by some of the additions in the proposed development code. In particular, I commend the section that allows for food production via market gardens in the borough.

Small-scale agricultural enterprises, as permitted in this section, are an important step in increasing our self sufficiency as a community and in fortifying and diversifying our local economy. However, I find the code as written has a major oversight that prevents it from achieving its state goal.

The proposed code lays out thoughtful and thorough regulations for small-scale agricultural enterprises to ensure that they are "at a scale that is appropriate to neighborhoods" and to "ensure that their uses and activities are compatible with the surrounding area by limiting potential negative effects, *particularly in residential neighborhoods.*" It addresses everything from the market garden's appearance and character to noise, fumes, traffic, and more.

Given this great attention to ensuring market gardens are compatible with existing neighborhoods, I am confused why the vast majority of neighborhoods in the borough-- those in low, medium and high-density residential zones-- are not currently included as permitted with special or conditional use. Should a market garden comply with these reasonable regulations that take pains to preserve a neighborhood's character, I believe it should be allowed to operate in residential zones on land that is not currently developed.

Therefore I'm asking the assembly to add high, medium, and low-density residential zones to the current list of permitted or conditional use areas for market gardens.

I thank you for your consideration of this addition to the proposed code and for your work in reviewing, amending and approving this rather lengthy document. I think it has great potential to add vitality to our shared community. Thank you.

2.3 – Special Use Standards

2.3.250 Food Production

A. Purpose. The purpose of the regulations in this Section is to increase access to affordable, healthful food for all. The regulations encourage Market Gardens, as defined in Chapter 5.1, at a scale that is appropriate to neighborhoods and support small-scale agricultural use of land that is not otherwise developed.

The regulations ensure that these uses and activities are compatible with the surrounding area by limiting potential negative effects, particularly in residential neighborhoods, and take into consideration neighborhood character, scale, visual impacts, traffic, noise, fumes, and hours of operation.

B. Market Garden Special Use Standards. Market Gardens, where allowed as a special use, shall conform to all of the following standards:

1. Maximum Area. Where allowed, the maximum area allowed for a Market Garden is specified in the table below. The planting area of a Market Garden includes the area under cultivation, the area covered by any structures associated with the garden, the compost pile, any off-street parking, or any other area associated with the activities of the garden.

| Type of Market Garden | Permitted with Special Use Standards | Special Use Standards + Conditional Use |
|---------------------------|---|---|
| Planting Area < 10,000 sf | Rural Residential; Downtown Commercial; General Commercial; | |
| Planting Area ≥ 10,000 sf | General Commercial; | Rural Residential; Downtown Commercial |

2. Sales.

a. On-site sales.

i. Nonresidential Districts. Where allowed in nonresidential zones, on-site sales are a Retail Sales And Service Use; and the following regulations apply:

(i.1) No parking is required in the Downtown Commercial district;

(i.2) Exterior display is allowed; and

(i.3) Only food and value-added products made from produce grown on site, such as jams and pickles, may be sold.

ii. Residential Districts. Where allowed in residential zones, on-site sales are allowed as accessory to the Agriculture use, and the following regulations apply:

(ii.1) No parking is required;

(ii.2) Exterior display is allowed;

(ii.3) Only food and value-added products made from produce grown on site, such as jams and pickles, may be sold; and

(ii.4) Sales are permitted a maximum of four hours a day, twice a week.

b. Off-site sales. Off-site sales are not limited by the regulations of this Section.

3. Operation in residential zones.

a. Where allowed in residential zones, operation may begin at 8 AM and must end at 9 PM. A Market Garden is operating if people are on the site. Automatic equipment functioning, such as sprinklers, is not considered operation.