

MEMORANDUM

SEPTEMBER 12, 2013

TO: BOSTON REDEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY AND
PETER MEADE, DIRECTOR

FROM: KAIROS SHEN, DIRECTOR OF PLANNING
LARA MERIDA, DEPUTY DIRECTOR FOR COMMUNITY PLANNING
TAD READ, SENIOR PLANNER III
MARIE MERCURIO, SENIOR PLANNER I

SUBJECT: ARTICLE 89: URBAN AGRICULTURE

SUMMARY: This Memorandum requests authorization to advertise for a public hearing to be held a date and time to be determined by the Director, regarding Article 89, the proposed citywide zoning article for urban agriculture.

BACKGROUND

In January 2012, the Boston Redevelopment Authority (“BRA”), along with the Mayor’s Office of Food Initiatives (“MOFI”), embarked on a planning and zoning process to address urban agriculture activities in the City of Boston as a national and local food movement became more prominent.

BRA and MOFI staff spent one and a half years working with the 25-member Mayor’s Urban Agriculture Working Group (“Working Group”) to discuss varying facets of urban agriculture, their best practices nationally, and what might be considered for Boston. The Working Group met with BRA and MOFI staff for 17 public Working Group meetings up through May 2013, and Article 89 was the end result of these meetings. Whereas most agricultural activities are not addressed and thus forbidden by existing zoning without Article 89, Article 89 will now address many activities, most notably farming on both the ground and on rooftops. Article 89 only addresses commercial agricultural endeavors; thus, community gardens and backyard gardening are not addressed under Article 89.

In the summer of 2013, the BRA and MOFI presented draft Article 89 to the neighborhoods of Boston through 11 community meetings. Staff received a variety of questions and comments during the neighborhood meetings. Overall the feedback was positive and supportive. Two more Working Group meetings in September 2013 will

convene to finalize Article 89 based on the feedback from the neighborhood meetings of the summer.

In summary, Article 89 is a citywide zoning article that has been prepared by the BRA in consultation with the MOFI and the Mayor's Urban Agriculture Working Group. It reflects the recommendations from a year and half planning process discussing aspects of urban agriculture. Article 89 will explicitly define these activities, outline their use regulations, and dimensional and design review requirements, thus breaking down the barriers and ambiguities involved with embarking on an urban agricultural venture in Boston.

An appropriate vote follows:

VOTED: That the Secretary be, and hereby is, authorized to advertise a public hearing before the BRA to be held at a date and time to be determined by the Director, regarding Article 89, the proposed citywide zoning article for urban agriculture.