

May 27, 2020

To whom it may concern,

My name is Dan Marion, and I am the owner and operator of Pitt Street Garden. I have been developing an urban farm and market garden for four years now in Cornwall on a 1.8 acre parcel of land. Prior to taking on this project I worked in urban agriculture and organic landscaping out West. I belonged to a community organization of urban farmers who focused on food security to help change municipal bylaws for urban chickens, boulevard gardens and farm-gate; selling produce from your property. They even developed a community seed bank where each member took responsibility of one species of plant to collect seeds.

There are many advantages in having a farm in the city and there are many disadvantages that come in from the obstacles of municipal bylaws and the public's perception of agriculture and farming.

When I started my farm here in Cornwall, I applied for a minor variance to construct a 100 foot greenhouse. It was opposed by my neighbours during the meeting for the approval. I came to realize that they believed a farm was the use of noisy farming equipment, the stench of spraying anaerobic fermented animal manure on the fields and the use of chemical fertilizer and pesticides. They even had concerns that there might be chickens.

Urban or peri-urban agriculture usually falls in the category of micro farms. The goal of these farms are to build topsoil, conserve the ecology by supporting habitat and help develop a local food production.

My business operates with a CSA model which means Community Supported Agriculture. Members of the community support me by committing to buying their produce from me throughout the whole growing season. This allows me to sell all my produce at market price without food going to waste.

Many modern cities in north America have embraced urban agriculture. In 2010 Seattle named it the year of urban agriculture. By then they had promoted community gardens, legalized urban chickens, and allowed end of driveway sales which developed cottage industry sales in the city.

Operating this business in a residential area has many limitations. The by-laws to allow employees or volunteers to be able to participate are onerous. The limitations around being able to sell vegetables from our property stifle some of the benefits of being in the city and being easily accessible to the public. Not being allowed a small number of chickens impacts the ability to create fertile soil without importing it. It would also benefit the community to be able to offer tours, teach workshops and classes and use the farm systems already in place as an example.

Cornwall is an ideal location to have a small-scale agriculture industry due the amount of land that we have available and the reasonable prices. We also fall into one of the warmest climates in eastern Ontario.

My business has been feeding people for a few years now and my members return to support me every year because they know that they are getting the freshest, most local organic produce available. They know that this choice is helping the environment by eliminating the transportation of food and by knowing exactly where their food is coming from.

I have realized that a project such as this one cannot have the impact that it could have on a community's food security without being able to teach and train others to produce food in this method. This business would be much more successful if it had the opportunity of having one or two interns or volunteers that could develop their own small farm and contribute to the community in the form of self-employment.

If the city wants to develop food security, reduce carbon emissions, create employment and look for a greener future then urban agriculture should be part of its plan.

Sincerely,

Dan Marion  
Pitt Street Garden