

## Connie Cobb

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**From:** CityCouncil  
**Sent:** Tuesday, November 27, 2012 1:01 PM  
**To:** 'Rob Richards'  
**Cc:** Councilmembers; Steve Hall; Keith Stahley; Jennifer Kenny; Amy Buckler  
**Subject:** RE: Urban Agriculture Amendments Minority Statement

Thank you for your comments. I will forward them on to all Councilmembers and appropriate staff.

*Mary Nolan*

*Executive Secretary*  
**CITY OF OLYMPIA**  
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*(360) 753-8244*

Please note that all correspondence is subject to public review.

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**From:** Rob Richards [<mailto:ofthecity@gmail.com>]  
**Sent:** Tuesday, November 27, 2012 12:40 PM  
**To:** CityCouncil; Amy Buckler; Keith Stahley; Steve Hall  
**Subject:** Urban Agriculture Amendments Minority Statement

Mayor Buxbaum and Members of the Council,

The Olympia Planning Commission recently deliberated on the Urban Agriculture code amendments to the Comprehensive Plan. It is my opinion that the final recommendation by the Commission fell short of what we heard from the experts in our community, and I do not feel that the final OPC recommendation to you was an accurate distillation of our community's vision, nor does it fully address the needs of our community.

The following are three points that I urge you to consider during your coming deliberations on this topic.

1. The recommended setback of 20 feet for front yard chicken coops and rabbit hutches are more restrictive than other cities in our region, and would make it impossible for many individuals and families, many of whom are low income and could benefit greatly from raising these animals. The justification for the 20 ft setback was not rooted in best practices, but purely an aesthetic one. Commissioners expressed that they didn't like how the coops and hutches looked, and didn't want them in their neighborhoods. The bottom line is that urban farming is a positive use of space, and food security is a prevalent issue. I want to live in a community that encourages good health, frugal living, and one that creates incentives, not barriers to people who want to raise their own food. **I recommend no more than a 5 foot setback for chicken coops and rabbit hutches in our front yards.**
2. While the Planning Commission recommended the right thing in recommending fence heights be raised to eight feet to prevent deer and other critters from getting into peoples' gardens, and eight foot fence would require a permit. The application fee for that permit is \$90, probably more than the cost of the fence itself. Many folks in our community are growing food for their family to eat, in order to cut costs in tough economic times, and this fee could be prohibitive. Additionally, the application review process is unclear, with no definite criteria for review, and

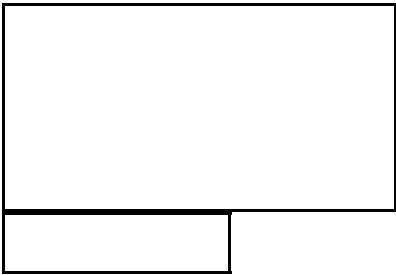
no appeals process. **I recommend doing away with the permit requirement for these types of fences altogether.**

3. The Planning Commission declined to recommend allowing low voltage solar electric wire between six and eight feet in height on fencing. This is safe, proven technology that both Lacey and Tumwater allow, and it's essential to keeping raccoons out of gardens, without causing them harm. **I recommend that we allow low voltage solar electric wire between six and eight feet in height on agricultural fencing in Olympia.**

Sincerely,

Rob Richards  
Comprehensive Plan Update Chair  
Olympia Planning Commission

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**ROB RICHARDS**

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