Presentation to City of Winnipeg Executive Policy Committee

November 7, 2012

Review of By-laws to Permit the Raising of Hens in the City of Winnipeg

Presentation by Paul Chorney

Mr Mayor and Councillors:

Thank you for the opportunity to present today.

In my presentation I will briefly offer some context for the current interest in urban hens, and then, Wi Fi willing, show a short video.

I spent my earliest years growing up in the north end of Winnipeg on Alfred Avenue. My memories of that time are of a rich and vital neighborhood life. We lived next door to Mrs. Lomow's grocery store which in addition to stocking fresh produce, seemed to a young boy a centre of community. It was in fact one of 3 corner groceries within a 2 block area. Around the corner was the local fish market, and a block away on Aberdeen the kosher butcher shop. Our synagogue was a few short blocks away on Magnus one of many in the area.

Also on Magnus lived Mrs. Freeman, the neighbourhood chicken lady. I recall looking forward to visiting her back yard with my mom or dad where I could see the coop and we would pick up our eggs.

On Saturdays afternoons we could walk to a thriving Selkirk Avenue and my brother and I might attend the Saturday matinee at the Palace or State theatres.

Also on Saturdays we might walk a bit further to the North Main Farmers' Market which seemed to my young eyes a feast of colors and a delight to the senses. The Market was open for much of the year and local farmers many of whom came from the market gardens of Henderson Highway along the river sold their beans or root vegetables on the site of the current Mt Carmel Clinic. California Fruit on the corner of Euclid and Main would be thronged with people.

All of that is gone now, and with it the rich community life that enclosed it. We have gained something...those of us who have the means can walk into a giant supermarket brimming with produce from all over the world and have an abundance of choices of food products, although our rising food bank rates show that many are not able to do so.

But we have also lost something...that more direct connection to our food. Many people throughout North America are discovering that they want to regain that connection..a sense that they have some power in choosing where their food will come from. Local food movements and urban agriculture are making a comeback everywhere as more and more people reach out for an authentic connection to the food that they eat whether that is through growing and producing their own, preserving fruit and vegetables for the winter, visiting a farmers' market, or through knowing the farmer or fisher who has provided the bounty we take for granted.

But taking our food for granted is more and more being seen as not a given but rather very fragile. The global food system with its reliance on oil and

pesticides, large mono cropping and ease of shipping foods thousands of miles may become problematic with the advent of climate change, expensive oil and financial uncertainty.

So, that, to me is a way to understand the current interest in urban chickens, and, for those of who are old enough to recall the 1940's and early 1950's, it's not something unknown.

A decision by the City to permit urban hens ought to be seen in the context of a renewed urban agriculture and its importance to a sustainable Winnipeg.

And that decision should be based on evidence....evidence that others will be offering today. I believe that it is persuasive.

Now, because seeing it is so much more powerful, I want to show a 5 minute video on urban chickens in Portland Oregon, a city recognized by many as a leader in creating liveable, sustainable urban community. It can be found on You Tube.

Thanks for your consideration.