

From: City of Minneapolis Community Environmental Advisory Commission

To: City of Minneapolis City Council; Mayor Jacob Frey; City of Minneapolis Health Department

Cc: City of Minneapolis Sustainability Division

Date: May 2, 2019

The Community Environmental Advisory Commission (CEAC) appreciates the City's efforts to promote regenerative agriculture and the creation and use of biochar as a method of sequestering and storing carbon, enhancing soil quality and productivity, protecting water quality, and creating healthier urban food systems. City staff have conducted thorough research proving the numerous benefits of regenerative agriculture and biochar has on soil microbial growth, air (carbon capture), water quality through filtration, and increased productivity of plant growth. CEAC is also in support of using ash tree debris that has been removed due to Emerald Ash Borer infestation or local/regional woody biomass as a sustainable source of feed to produce biochar.

CEAC would like to see environmental equity further integrated in Council Member Schroeder's resolution. Specifically, CEAC would like the resolution to include that regenerative agriculture efforts by the City, including distribution of biochar, will first be introduced in neighborhoods facing the greatest environmental burdens, such as in the green zones, so that these areas of the City are the first to realize the benefits of this emerging resource. Biochar application has the potential of bonding to harmful heavy metals in the soil, such as lead, and making them less bioavailable and harmful to human health when plants grown in lead-containing soil are consumed by people.

Further, if the City attempts to provide removed trees as feedstock for biochar production, CEAC supports that Council Member Schroeder's resolution include that the City will prioritize distributing this feedstock to biochar producers that fall in the Green Zones and/or overburdened communities to promote economic activity in these areas.

CEAC has concerns about potential emissions from transportation and processing for the neighborhood in which the facility would be located. City Council should research potential dust and emissions impacts, and engage with the community prior to siting a facility.

Lastly, CEAC would like Council Member Schroeder's resolution to include that the City will work with the Minneapolis Public School District to teach and engage youth on regenerative agriculture and biochar. Given regenerative agriculture and biochar's potential for environmental benefit, it will be critical that future generations are given the

opportunity to learn about regenerative agriculture and biochar as emerging leaders in the environmental movement.

CEAC encourages the Council Member Schroeder to incorporate this feedback into his resolution for CEAC to fully support it.

Sincerely,

Erin Niehoff, Chair

On behalf of the Community Environmental Advisory Commission