

**Town of Boscawen
Agricultural Commission
Meeting Minutes
February 12, 2015**

Commissioners Present: John Keegan, Elaine Clow, Angela Swyers, William Bevans

Alternate Commissioners Present: Tom Danko

Commissioners Absent: Tina Larochelle

Commissioners Ex-Officio Absent: Roger Sanborn

Alternate Commissioners Absent: Ken Marshall, John Porter

Others present: Alan Hardy, Planning & Community Development Director, Kellee Jo Easler, Community Planning and Development Assistant Director, Bruce Crawford, Chair, Planning Board, Barbara Lassonde, Publicity Specialist from Granite Publicity & Promotion

Chair J. Keegan called the meeting to order at 7:03pm. The Commission appointed alternate T. Danko to vote in place of absent regular members. J. Keegan directed members to the Commission's meeting materials packet.

Review and Acceptance of the prior meeting's minutes J. Keegan directed members to the Ag Commission meeting minutes of **01/08/2015**. After some discussion, all members agreed to make a few minor grammatical amendments.

Elaine Clow made a motion to accept the meeting minutes of February 12, 2015 as amended. T. Danko seconded the motion which passed unanimously with a vote of four (4) to zero (0) in favor.

Review and Acceptance of the Accountant Report: J. Keegan directed the Commission to the Ag Commission Account Report which was recently restructured by the Budget Committee. After a brief review, Commission found the report acceptable for approval.

E. Clow made a motion to accept the Ag Commission Accountant Report of 01/31/2015 as presented. A. Swyer seconded the motion which passed with a vote of four (4) to zero (0) in favor.

Land Use Happenings: J. Keegan directed the Commission to the Land Use Happenings portion of the Meeting Agenda.

Follow-up on Site Visit to 208 High Street: J. Keegan requested that T. Danko provide the Commission with an update regarding a previous site visit conducted at 208 High Street to gauge any foreseeable impact to surrounding properties should the owner be allowed by the Zoning Board of Adjustment to house a horse on the property. T. Danko opined that the property is located in a secluded area, surrounded by trees, and is not close to any other houses. J. Keegan informed the Commission that the site visit report generated in support of the request will be entered into public record at the ZBA meeting of February 19th, 2015.

Status of Egg Production Enterprise on Rt. 4: J. Keegan requested that Bruce Crawford, Planning Board Chair, provide the Commission with a brief overview of the Egg Production Enterprise project which occurred at the Town's last Planning Board meeting. Bruce stated that the presentation and business session went very smoothly, and that the project's agents were accommodated by the Board in every way possible. Crawford informed members that one abutter contacted Town Hall with concerns that the project is even required to present a site plan as it is located in an agricultural zone, and also stated that the project site's

next door neighbor attended the Board meeting and expressed support of the project. Lastly, Bruce informed the Commission that the project was formally approved by the Planning Board

J. Keegan informed the Commission and guests that he was told there may be concerns from the project owner regarding the possibility of negative publicity from the Concord area. The Commission agreed that they are in support of the project being located in Boscawen and don't believe any negative repercussions would take place from neighboring communities. The Commission agreed to wait and see how the situation continues to develop.

Farm and Forest Right to Farm Report: J. Keegan informed the Commission that he attended the *NH Farm and Forest Expo* and directed them to the meeting packet containing materials from the event.

Keegan informed the Commission that State Representative Robert Haefner, who is also the Chairperson for the House of Representatives Environment & Agriculture Committee, presented materials focused on Right-to-Farm legislation and made the point that New Hampshire's laws are seen as an effective tool. Representative Haefner stated that his committee doesn't expect much activity in legislative session, but informed the guests that the committee will be guests at the Crete Farm to showcase and recognize **Adam and Patricia Crete**, the **Young Farmers Achievement Award** from the New Hampshire Farm Bureau Federation.

Keegan directed the Commission to materials presented Amy Manzelli, Esq., BCM Environmental & Land Law. The presentation focused on the definitions of farm (RSA 21:34), Nuisances; Toilets; Drains; Expectorations; Rubbish and Waste (RSA 147:1), the use of agricultural best management practices (RSA 431:34), Improper Handling (RSA 431:35), and Agricultural Use of Land (RSA 674:32).

Keegan stated that the points he took away from this presentation were that the Supreme Court is the last resort when speaking of definitions relative to agriculture, and there are still no solid definitions in place for farm stand and agritourism. In addition, the Commission discussed the fact that best management practices are not always mandated and sometimes can only be seen as guidelines. Alan Hardy stated that the best management practice guidelines would need to be a condition of approval or be in violation of some other law (such as RSA 147:1) in order for these practices to have a legal standing.

Keegan informed the Commission that Theresa Walker, a Land Use Planner with the Rockingham Planning Commission, as well as the Chair of the Durham Agricultural Commission, and Matt Strassberg from the NH Agricultural Mediation Program presented advertisements for the respective programs.

Lastly, Keegan provided a brief synopsis of a presentation titled "Making your Farm Business More Community Friendly. The presentation was given by **Tim O'Connell**, **Russ Atherton**, and **Chip Hardy**, three local farmers who provided guests with a list of common rules for a successful agricultural enterprise. The rules are as follows:

- Speak with abutters before beginning a project
- Work with Town officials before the start of the project
- Find a community that wants the business and supports local agriculture
- Be a good citizen in the community and contribute
- Contract public resources
- Allow access of the land to the public if possible
- Be proactive in the identification of possible issues and speak with abutters

Keegan directed the Commission to materials within the meeting packet for the afternoon session. Keegan stated that the afternoon session focused on a grant funded project which is coordinated by the UNH Sustainability Institute (UNHSI) to gather feedback on the New Hampshire Food System, such as the identification of all challenges, all success stories, and understanding the key priorities for strengthening and advancing the system for the state and its residents. Keegan stated that overall goal is to develop a connected network of businesses, organizations, institutions, agencies, and individuals that contribute to the NH food system. By advocating for a participatory process, this network will create a **food strategy** that will identify shared goals and actions that contribute to a robust, equitable, and healthy food system in NH. Keegan stated that Representative Brown attended the presentation as well as members from the New England Farmers Union.

Other: NHMA Webinar: Local Regulations of Agriculture on February 11th. J. Keegan requested any additional comments from members regarding the webinar. E. Clow stated that the majority of the presentations were geared towards the state statutes and current land use law as opposed to the issue of land use law not keeping up with where New Hampshire agriculture is moving right now. E. Clow opined that certain legislation, such as RSA 147:1, are designed to overshadow other regulatory standards and that it is important to remain in compliance with such laws.

New Business: J. Keegan addressed the Commission about a concern regarding the decline in participation at the Community Garden. Keegan informed the Commission that he had a conversation with Barbara Lassonde, a Publicity Specialist from Granite Publicity & Promotion, about how best to engage more people in the Commission's Programs, and invited her to the meeting for a discussion.

B. Lassonde introduced herself to members and stated that she hopes to provide the Commission with some assistance in finding ways to maximize the use of the Community Gardens. B. Lassonde inquired as to what the declining plot purchase numbers look like over the past few seasons. E. Clow stated that the maximum number of plots purchased was 55 a few years ago and was down to 23 during the growing season in 2014. E. Clow stated that combined, the Commissions programs have over 500 participants, but that advertising is frustrating at times as it can be very difficult to achieve the advertising exposure through traditional channels.

B. Lassonde inquired about the current efforts for street signage as an advertising method to help locate the Garden for potential users. J. Keegan stated that the Commission is currently working on a design. A. Swyers presented the current design and stated that small, detachable secondary signage will be a part of the overall sign to help advertise internal functions and new products etc. Barbara recommended a large sign capable of visually advertising for programs such as the annual draft horse event, garden lectures, the herb garden area, and internal opportunities such as the herb and wildflower gardens.

B. Crawford stated that while the Corn Hill Road may not have the highest vehicle miles traveled figures in Boscawen, it likely has the most Boscawen residents travelling it than any other road as it connects residents to the local transfer station.

B. Lassonde inquired as to what methods the Commission has been focusing on with regard to advertising. Members provided the following listed of current advertising campaigns.

- The Boscawen News Vine – Community Website
- Posts within the Town Hall as well as the Town Library
- The Agricultural Commission e-mail list
- Outreach efforts at Town meetings
- Town Report

B. Lassonde advised the Commission that generating poster (8 ½ x 11 size) advertising the community garden and providing information would be a good way to start getting the word out to the public. The poster could be placed at strategic locations such as: 1) the public library, 2) local stores, 3) the Town transfer station, 4) the local food pantry, 5) the local welfare office, 6) Town Hall, 7) outlets with the local school system. Lassonde suggested that the Commission reach out to the coordinators of the local welfare office and food pantry and ask them to mention the garden to their clients, work with local farmers to provide extra seeds etc.

Commission member William Bevans arrived to the meeting at 7:51pm.

B. Lassonde inquired if the Commission has ever utilized the services of the Merrimack Valley Voice newspaper. E. Clow stated that they have had some success in the past with the Merrimack Valley Voice but not recently. Lassonde inquired as to what format the advertisements were presented to the newspaper. E. Clow stated that they are submitted as either an article or as a press release. B. Lassonde urged the Commission to keep sending the press releases/articles to as many newspapers as possible in order to maximize the potential for positive results. E. Clow stated that the Commission has had some success with the University of New Hampshire Cooperative Extension, and that some individuals have found the Commission's advertising efforts from outlets such as the Farm Bureau and from the Weekly Market Bulletin. B. Lassonde stated that sometimes the way press releases are written can have implications for which advertisements are chosen by the paper.

J. Keegan directed the Commission back to the conversation regarding reaching out to the local school systems. Keegan opined that having a method to put Ag Commission materials into the hands of parents would be a great way to advertise for services such as the community garden. A. Swyers stated that the flyers being contemplated could also be used at the schools. B. Lassonde recommended targeting some of the higher residential density areas in the community such as mobile home parks and apartment complexes. Using common areas, bulletin boards, or mailboxes may be a convenient way to advertise to people who may not have the land available to them for their own gardens. J. Keegan inquired if a list of park owners is available to ask for permission to undertake such an effort. A. Hardy stated that the list can be obtained at the Planning and Community Development office.

Action Plan: The Garden Committee will ask Kellee for the park owners by March 5th.

B. Lassonde stated that the large community garden sign for the roadway will provide the Commission with the largest advertising booster and is critical to the garden's success.

B. Crawford opined that improving the garden's appearance will have positive implications on the garden's overall success. While he was unsure of where some of the work would come from, Danko stated that taking the work out of the plot(s), such as the removal of unwanted growth/weeds, and planting crops in such a way that tilling and other maintenance activities can be accomplished with ease may be a key component to drawing interest. E. Clow and A. Swyers agreed that one of the current issues is the existing irrigation system. The system is not currently working properly and plot owners need to be more responsible for watering operations. The Commission agreed that aesthetics for the garden are of the utmost importance. The Commission agreed that setting plots up in more of a grid-like pattern with successful plots moved closer to the roadway, would help to improve positive aesthetics.

T. Danko stated that taking pictures of Commission events, such as the draft horse event, and utilizing them for advertisement activities is also an important factor. B. Lassonde inquired if pictures are included in the press releases sent to local newspapers. E. Clow stated that the pictures are included.

J. Keegan inquired if any members had other questions for Barbara. A. Swyers asked if social media was a viable outlet for advertising. A. Hardy stated that one of the issues with utilizing social media website for a public service is that there are often-times difficulties with the regular maintenance of that site. Someone will need to answer questions that may arise from users, maintain the site, update the site when appropriate etc. A. Swyers opined that because the agricultural community in Boscawen is so small, it may not produce the types of issues that may arise with larger sites set up for a public service such as the Police Department. A. Hardy stated that the Town website is currently utilized to post AG Commission happenings and that external links to public service social media sites etc., are posted on the website as well. A. Hardy informed the Commission that Acting Town Clerk Michelle Brochu is maintaining the current website and will be working with the Town's website developer to generate an updated site for the community.

Keegan opined that he is reluctant to start a social media outlet for the Commission outside of the Town's purview, and has reservation with regard to the required maintenance and potential issues that may arise from its creation. The Commission members spoke about the potential for limiting membership to limit potential conflicts, and ways to police certain posts on a social media site. B. Lassonde inquired if Boscawen currently has a community blog which could be used to advertising purposes. Lassonde stated that the community would need someone to administer the blog, who is interested in the issues being posted and willing to dedicate time and effort to the blog and urged members to look into this possibility.

The Commission thanked Barbara for her time and insight regarding advertising.

Old Business: J. Keegan directed the Commission to items within the meeting packet containing Agricultural data and articles taken from the *NH Farm and Forest Expo* and urged members to review them for an interesting read and for reference purposes.

Review Action Plans from January 8th meeting: J. Keegan directed the Commission to the next item on the Agenda regarding Action Steps which were discussed at the Commission's last meeting on 01/08/2012. Keegan stated that most items have been addressed (chicken farm & follow up appointment, Town Report was submitted, 2015 calendar year objectives to be pushed forward etc.).

Keegan reminded the Commission about an interview with *Town and City Magazine*, which he, Elaine, and Bruce attended. Representatives from the magazine included its editor-in-chief Tim Fortier and Margaret Byrnes, an NHMA attorney. Keegan stated that the meeting went very well, and that he responded to some questions that were posed. E. Clow stated that she also responded to several questions. Keegan informed the Commission that Tim Fortier will be sending a draft of the article for review.

Keegan directed the Commission to current House Bills up for discussion (see below) and requested an update from B. Crawford.

- Farm Stand Legislation HB 200 & HB 660-FN: B. Crawford stated that HB 200 was heard but does not believe it has moved any further. Crawford stated that HB 660-FN has not yet come up for discussion. After some discussion, members agreed that there is concern for the function of this legislation with regard to proposed exemptions.
- Load limits for maple (HB178): B. Crawford informed the Commission that HB 178 went through the House Committee with a recommendation to pass.

Community Kitchen Update: J. Keegan requested an update on the Community Kitchen. E. Clow directed the Commission members to a meeting notes document from a 01/25/2015 meeting for the Commercial Kitchen concept which took place at Richardson's and included several potential producers. E. Clow informed the Commission that the group had narrowed down the potential sites to seven, which are located

in the towns of Boscawen, Warner, Pembroke, and Hooksett. The question of whether or not there would be implications relative to the Boscawen Town Hall/church being National Historic Site was posed. E. Clow stated that she provided the project agents with the general standards and recommendations from the National Park Service for reference. A. Hardy informed the Commission that this would not apply as it is the Town property in question and not the church itself. A. Hardy stated that the very base of the church would be the issue as alterations to that structure would trigger National Historic Site issues for the project. After further discussion, the Commission agreed to wait for the future project progress report to be submitted as the project is currently open-ended at this stage.

Action Plan: J. Keegan to inquire of Liz Sweeney as to the project report due date.

Educational Program: J. Keegan directed the Commission to the Educational Program update. E. Clow informed the Commission that the *Raising Turkeys* presentation (to be provided by Dot Perkins, UNHCE Food & Agriculture) is coming up and stated that on January 17, 2015 Dot Perkins provided a two-part presentation on the *Basics of Raising Chickens*. Clow informed the Commission that both parts 1 and 2 had of *Raising Chickens* had upwards of 25 participants, and stated that the presentation on *Raising Broilers* was cancelled due to weather. E. Clow informed the Commission that the *Raising Broilers* presentation has not yet been rescheduled.

Community Garden: J. Keegan directed the Commission to the Community Garden discussion. Keegan stated that the conversation with Barbara Lassonde focused on putting together many of the Garden Committee tasks, and wanted to inform members that the herb garden is coming together. A compost donation from Blue Seal has been procured, as well as a manure donation from Roger Sanborn, herb plant and seed donations from Garden Committee members, and a plan to secure timbers from Colby Lumber Co is underway. In addition, Keegan informed the Commission that the Garden Committee has begun looking at potential revisions to the current application materials, and impressed upon members the need to expedite a solution to the current irrigation problems at the site.

J. Keegan informed members that the next meeting of the Garden Committee will be on February 19th from 5:30pm to 6:30pm before the Zoning Board of Adjustment meeting.

Lastly, Keegan informed the Commission that Adam and Patricia Crete will be attending the next Ag Commission meeting scheduled for March 12, 2015 to discuss their Young Farmer Achievement award designated by the Farm Bureau.

E. Clow made a motion to adjourn the Agriculture Commission meeting of 02/12/2015. The motion was seconded by T. Danko and unanimously approved at 8:37pm.

Next Meeting:

March 12, 2015 at 7:00pm

Respectfully submitted,

Gregory M. Jones

03/17/2015