

Town of Boscawen
Agricultural Commission
Meeting Minutes – Draft
Boscawen Municipal Complex – 4th Floor Meeting Room
January 12, 2017 at 7pm

Members Present: John Keegan – Chair, Elaine Clow – Vice-Chair, Tina Larochelle, John Porter, Bill Bevens, Josh Marshall.

Members Absent: Angela Swyers

Member Ex-Officio Absent: Roger Sanborn

Others Present: Alan Hardy – Planning and Community Development Director, Katie Phelps – Recording Secretary, Tom Danko, Tom Giovagnoli, Jeff Abbe, and Ann Lacroix.

Chairman Keegan called the meeting to order at 6:55pm with a voting board.

Chairman Keegan took a moment to thank everyone for their support during the last ten months during his leave. He is happy to be back and doing well.

Roll Call made by Chairman Keegan.

Review and Acceptance of Prior Meeting Minutes:

Motion made by Bill Bevens, and seconded by Tina Larochelle, to accept the minutes from the September meeting as written. All in favor.

Accountant's Reports:

The Commission reviewed year-end reports including the Treasurer's Report as well as transaction detailed account information for Garden Plot Fees, Community Garden, and Administration.

Motion made by Bill Bevens, and seconded by Tina Larochelle to accept the Accountant's Report. All in favor.

Land Use Updates:

- **Updates from Alan Hardy:**

Boscawen is having unprecedented growth. In 2016 we started nearly 60 homes. To give some comparison, typically we would be looking at 10 homes as an average. The project down by the river will be 38 two bedroom townhouses. If this were happening in 90s or 2000s we would be looking at a significant increase in school population. As a society we are not creating the population growth that we have in the past. New Hampshire is aging. People coming to town are older. As taxpayers we believe it's a positive trend because our tax rate is based on the total asset value of the town. When someone builds a new home it adds to that asset value.

In 2018 we will have the next reevaluation of the town. When we lose value the tax rate goes up. If the trend continues the total asset value next year will increase significantly. The six three bedroom duplexes by Ross Express should be completed shortly. There are three buildings complete already. The 38 two bedroom townhouses should be complete by the end of June 2017. The market value should increase as opposed to 2012 when the last study was done.

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Chairman Keegan asked if there has been urban development or if they have been taking agricultural or forest land. Alan said the biggest change taking place has been at the old Knowlton farm. There was a seven lot subdivision recently approved. The largest is the interior lot at 35 acres. The house and five acres were separated from the land. Someone has purchased the old farm house and is renovating it.

John Porter asked what has been going on at the tannery. Alan says the town has applied for two grants. Central NH Regional Planning Commission had applied for and received \$400,000 and the Boscawen tannery project was selected for an EPA contamination assessment. We know there is heavy metal contamination there. The State ended up turning around after the assessment and gave the town less than 24hrs to clean up the contamination. Alan called Representative Caroletta Alicea and when the Department of Environmental Services arrived at the site she was already there. Rep. Alicea pointed out that when towns are trying to clean things up you don't punish them. The second grant the town applied for is a \$300,000 assessment grant directly from EPA based upon the findings of the first study. It's a competitive grant and we still haven't heard back about it. The Regional EPA representatives say we are in good shape. With the combination of the grants we stand the chance of making some change at the tannery. The town owns the Stratton Flour mill and the soap building with the brick chimney. We are committing some of our landfill space for the debris.

Boscawen has one of the last construction debris landfills operating in the state. Due to what has been going on in the lower half of the state with chemicals DES is focused there. Alan thinks it's unlikely that we will have a lot of time left. The target date to close the landfill to inbound material is 2020. From there we will contract to haul material to another site. Dean Hollins says the rate of six cents per pound that we currently charge to dump debris will cover the cost of hauling to Bradford.

- **Mapping Town Agricultural/Forest Land:**

Chairman Keegan says he recently put some land into a conservation easement. In 2012 there was a map of Boscawen put in the Master Plan which showed land in current use. He suggested that a collaboration with the Conservation Commission to update the map may be the best way to go. The map shows that significant real estate in the Town of Boscawen is in current use. There are also pieces of land held in conservation easements. The Conservation Commission is looking to bring blocks of land together to create uninterrupted forests or open land which has many benefits. Alan mentioned that quite a bit of land has been acquired by Mason Donovan.

The Penacook-Boscawen Water Precinct has expressed an interest in divesting their property. There is a piece of property in between Tina Larochelle and Walker Pond that has the former pumping station. If the Conservation Commission can work something out to protect the precinct's interests to pump from Walker pond and, if need be in the future, secure the lot. Current access to Walker Pond is on private property and owned by the Penacook-Boscawen Water Precinct.

Chairman Keegan asked how the Commission would like to proceed. He asked if attending a meeting to speak with the Conservation Commission would be beneficial. Alan mentioned that we can copy the Agricultural Commission on any Conservation minutes that may be beneficial to them. We also have a

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new mapping system through GRANIT. We have the parameters for the town and lots and can color the lots any way you want. The current map needs to be updated.

Motion made by Vice-Chair Elaine Clow, and seconded by Tina Larochelle, to engage in maintaining contact with the Conservation Commission and having Alan and staff put together an up-to-date map. All in favor.

Old Business:

- **Education Program**

Vice-Chair Elaine Clow says there is an upcoming round table that Jeff Abbe will be leading on Monday, February 6, 2017 at 6:30pm at the Boscawen Municipal Complex 4th floor meeting room. It will be directed at both community gardeners and other local gardeners. Jeff plans to have a discussion on seed selection and things that have worked well at the community garden. They will also be putting together a FEDCO bulk seed order. The savings will be on the shipping costs. Secondly, if they have a \$100 order, they will get 10% off. A \$300 order would be eligible for 20% off. They are non-GMO seeds and they have a large selection of organic seeds as well. You can get small or large quantities and the catalog is available online as well.

Ms. Clow said John Keegan and, possibly, Jeff will be meeting with Amy Papineau to discuss new ideas for future education programs for the rest of the year starting in March. There has been a suggestion to have Dot Perkins back to talk about chickens. She is a wonderful speaker and draws a good audience. Chairman Keegan says the Cooperative Extension is dealing with increased demand and limited staff so they may have to pull back on some of the support they have offered in the past. There may be additional burden they are looking to pass on to town staff in terms of publicity and registration.

Ms. Clow asked John Porter if he had any talks coming up that he would like to share. He said the ones he is working on aren't necessarily pertinent to this audience. He does have something on waste handling for small scale dairy goats that is packaged and ready to go if there is any interest. Alan mentioned the potential of having a new dairy in town on Long Street if Morrill Farm goes forward.

- **Community Garden & 2017 Budget:**

John Porter said the garden shed was mentioned a couple meetings ago. He stopped and spoke with John Silver and the garden shed has since been placed on a concrete slab and is actively used for County maintenance storage. He recommends going to the State Prison to see if they can cut a deal to construct a new shed. Jeff Abbe said that's an option and he has a contact. It would cost approximately \$1,500-\$2,000. He suggests making it on 2"x 6" skids so it moves easily.

Alan states no action was taken to encumber leftover funds from 2016 so they are no longer available. He recommends that once this project is a go, to ask the Board of Selectman to use the Garden Plot Fees for the purpose of paying for the new shed. John Porter asked if it is too late to increase the budget. Alan said no. The budget was presented as a whole and they are looking at a 2.33% increase from last year – mainly

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due to insurance. The Board of Selectmen didn't finalize the budget because there was one area they are looking to change. Josh Marshall asked whether the shed was something needed or if it was a wish list item. Vice-Chair Clow said it was needed to store equipment they already have. Jeff Abbe would like to come up with a Master Plan for the garden to outline where things will go. Discussion ensued regarding the amount to alter the 2017 budget.

Motion made by Vice-Chair Elaine Clow, and seconded by Tina Larochelle to increase the Physical Improvements budget by \$500 and to ask the Board of Selectmen to use 2017 Garden Plot Fees towards the purchase of a new shed for the Community Garden. All in favor.

Chairman Keegan asked about weed control measures taken at the community garden last year. There was an underutilized section as well as another section that had been cultivated in the past not tilled last spring. Buckwheat and winter rye were used for weed control. Ann Lacroix mentioned that shallow tilling or harrowing would allow the organic compost matter to remain on the top rather than deep plowing. The extreme heat and sand caused poor germination in many plots. Vice-Chair Clow said the people who used mulch had a fantastic crop. Josh Marshall recommended a disc harrow. He said if someone wants to drive him up there he wouldn't mind doing it. Tom Giovagnoli offered his trailer.

Ann Lacroix discussed new signage. There has been low attendance at garden talks. She wanted to see the kiosk have a sign on the side facing Corn Hill Road. She showed the Commission a prototype. Alan said the "Welcome to Boscawen" signs have an aluminum logo and are designed to last a long time. They were made at the State Prison. Ann says the logo is a 19" diameter.

Ann mentioned that she works at Blue Seal Feeds and can get 4x4ft shrub protectors for around \$18 a piece. It would create better signage for the Community Garden and also help advertise when there are garden talks or other events they would be mobile and fold up for storage when not being used.

Motion made by Vice-Chair Elaine Clow, and seconded by Tina Larochelle, to purchase two 4x4ft foldable shrub protectors. All in favor.

- **Tom Giovagnoli Egg Operation:**

Tom wanted to take the opportunity to thank everyone for their help in making his egg operation possible. If it wasn't for the effort of the Commission and others he would still be in Dunbarton.

The birds are producing eggs and he is selling chicken manure. His peak egg volume is at 95%. He has 20,000 birds and they are producing approximately 19,000 eggs per day. By the time the birds are gone at 60 weeks he should hopefully still be close to 80% volume.

His facility is cage free, free range, organic, and certified humane. He is currently being certified for Whole Foods. Pete & Gerry's birds are certified humane which has more stringent rules than organic. Each bird has 1.2 sq. ft. inside the barn. Outside the barn each bird has 2 sq. ft. Whole Foods Certification requires that each bird have 10 sq. ft. of outside access. He will have 5 acres of pasture for the birds in the spring.

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He is currently at 16hrs of light which is where they will stay. The lights come on in the barn at 4:00am. By 6:00am the birds are ready to lay eggs. By 8:00am they start to taper down. By noon they are done laying eggs. The doors for outside access won't open until at least noon to avoid eggs being laid outside. He has approximately 30-40 eggs laid on the floor of the building out of 20,000 birds. He is shipping eggs every Friday and will be selling chicken manure locally. His feed comes from Green Mountain Feeds in Vermont. There are water and grain feeders and 1" roost pipes so the chickens can get off the floor. The air quality in his barn is very good and the ammonia level is low. He explained the fan system in the facility.

Pete & Gerry's has approximately 100 contract farmers in 14 states. If there is a potential second barn for him it won't be until 2018. Mr. Giovagnoli offered the Commission the option to sell the extra eggs for a fundraiser if needed. Chairman Keegan said that was a very generous offer.

- **Town Report:**

- Elaine Clow will do a write up on education
- Jeff Abbe will do a write up on the Community Garden
- John Keegan will take information from minutes about Tom Giovagnoli
- Josh Marshall will compile all sections together
- Future View: Working with Conservation?

- **Legislative Updates:**

Vice-Chair Elaine Clow says legislative bills will begin coming out on Tuesday, January 17, 2017. One of them will be on Agritourism but no one knows what's in it yet.

The discussion on the "Buy Local" brochure will be done at the next meeting. Chairman Keegan passed around a guide from Loudon as an example.

Motion to adjourn made by Josh Marshall, and seconded by Bill Bevans. All in favor. The meeting adjourned at 9:03pm.

Next meeting of the Commission will be February 9, 2017 at 7pm.

Minutes respectfully submitted by Katie Phelps