

**Town of Boscawen
AGRICULTURAL COMMISSION
Boscawen Municipal Complex
MEETING MINUTES
Thursday, September 8th, 2022, at 6:30 PM**

Members Present: John Keegan—Chair, John Porter—Vice Chair, Gary Tillman, Roger Sanborn, Bill Bevans and Julie Fournier—Alternate

Staff Present: Kearsten O’Brien—Deputy Planning & Community Development Director, Kara Gallagher—Planning & Community Development Assistant & Lorrie Carey—Ex Officio

Excused: Ralph Odell

Absent: Tatyanna Wunschel—Alternate

Chair Keegan opened the public meeting at 6:30 P.M.

Roll Call complete.

Review and Acceptance of Prior Meeting Minutes: Mr. Tillman requested one change to line 48, add ‘post’ after ‘...trying to’ but before ‘an article...’.

Mr. Tillman said on line 83, the statement was written incorrectly. He was referring to a central gathering point for the Town as a whole, not the Community Garden. Strikethrough ‘...at the garden’ and replace with ‘...from local gardens.’

Mr. Tillman motioned to approve the 08.11.22 draft minutes as amended. Seconded by Mr. Sanborn. All in favor. None opposed.

Financial Report:

Mr. Tillman motioned to approve the Financial Report through 09.08.22 as presented. Seconded by Mr. Sanborn. All in favor. None opposed.

Land Use Happenings:

- *Revitalization Plan for Town of Boscawen:* Chair Keegan opened discussion about the Revitalization Plan for the Town of Boscawen. Ex Officio Carey said the Select Board received this report from the consultant at the University of Connecticut. They couldn’t provide specific information on Commercial Street but they discussed revitalization town wide and areas of opportunities. Ex Officio Carey said DES has given grants to clean-up smaller Brownfields sites. They were looking at auto body shops such as Davis Auto Body because there could be spillage of environmentally difficult materials to remove. Doherty Place is another area mentioned. She went on to say the property owners would have opportunities with tax incentives provided for redevelopment of the Mill Areas. The Town also has the option to take the property for economic development reasons and clean it up themselves. Ex Officio Carey reported the Fire Chief had concerns about the mill buildings collapsing and impacting the road or river. Deputy PCD Director O’Brien said Commercial Street is within the Economic Revitalization Zone (ERZ) which means businesses could apply to the state for a break on their Business Profit Tax. Discussion ensued. Chair Keegan’s primary interest stemmed from any potential impact on the Rail Trail and discussions of economic spin offs related to local businesses and farm production.

Old Business: Vice Chair John Porter will track Commissioners Tasks for October.

- **Rail Trail:** Vice Chair Porter said construction on the Northern Rail Trail between Hannah Duston and the existing entry has started. It will be ready for big tire bicycles and walking this fall. The first phase will be preparing the trail bed. The second phase, applying the fine dust, will be on hold until \$20,000 is raised. Chair Keegan suggested asking GMI about donating material for the Rail Trail. Deputy PCD Director O'Brien will reach out about the GMI contact.
- **Old Home Day Sheep:** The Commissioners discussed the success of the Old Home Day sheep cutouts and theme. Ms. Fournier said the grand prize winner, Brooke Noonan, lives near her on King St. Mr. Tillman said all the winners were posted on Facebook. Ms. Fournier said the target was 30 sheep to be sold at \$15 each. She suggested a higher target number for next competition because demand was high and they could have sold more. Chair Keegan suggested in the future asking participants to bring their cutouts to the OHD parade and put them on a float. He also suggested bringing them to the OHD Celebration for display, thinking more residents would be able to see them and as another activity for the kids. Mr. Sanborn suggested doing chicken cutouts next year. Chair Keegan suggested spacing out the agricultural themes so they are not repeated too often. Deputy PCD Director O'Brien suggested alternating theme years with a different committee or commission, such as Conservation. Discussion ensued.
- **Routes 3 & 4 Planning:** Chair Keegan met with Police Chief Kevin Wyman about speeding concerns on Routes 3 and 4. He said Chief Wyman stated it is a state road, so the Police Department has limitations. He also stated from his perspective the most effective approach would be putting up speed signs. Chair Keegan noted the sign went in on Route 4 within a few days. Chair Keegan spoke with Bill Lambert, NHDOT, about the situation. Mr. Lambert told him that people only pay attention to signs for a little while. He noted that complaints about speeding, running red lights and generally more aggressive driving have come to his office following the pandemic. Deputy PCD Director O'Brien said the Route 3 & 4 NHDOT proposal, which currently shows a new roundabout at this junction, has been posted on the Town Website. Members of the public can make suggestions related to the plans directly to NHDOT. Construction is scheduled for 2026. Ms. Fournier would like to see signs put up and enforced. Discussion ensued. Chair Keegan will relay feedback to Mr. Lambert.
- **Master Plan:** PCD Assistant Gallagher reported to the Commissioners that the Agricultural Chapter has been updated. The office is waiting for other committees and commissions to finish their chapters so the Planning Board can finalize all of the revisions with pictures. Chair Keegan would like Commissioners to help make the picture selections and provide input on the final selections for the Master Plan. Deputy PCD Director O'Brien offered to send a Google link with all the pictures to each Commissioner so all can vote and then discuss the finalists at the next meeting. All concurred.
- **Penacook Welcome Sign:** Vice Chair Porter hasn't reviewed the current condition of the Penacook Welcome Sign. He mentioned it may need work because the engraved letters are absorbing water and require rebuilding. Vice Chair Porter will review conditions this month.

- Community/Herb Garden: Chair Keegan updated the Commission on Mr. Jeff Abbe's visit from Ruth Smith, head of the Master Gardener Program. The purpose was to put together a work plan and to develop a committee that would help with the maintenance and administration at the garden. They identified the job categories needed but each requires a more detailed description of duties and expectations. Once done, then proceed with volunteer recruitment. Chair Keegan asked Commissioner(s) to consider helping Mr. Abbe write the job descriptions. Mr. Abbe and Ms. Smith also discussed how to continue the composting education efforts. The Community Garden received a serviceable barrel composter from the Landfill Recycling Program that is now being used to compost kitchen and garden waste by some gardeners. If possible, Mr. Abbe would like to offer an education program to focus on training current community gardeners to compost at home as well as at the garden. There are 35+ individuals involved in the Community Garden. Chair Keegan asked for a volunteer(s) to work with Mr. Abbe to organize and offer this presentation before the end of this gardening season.

New Business:

- Invasive Species Training: Chair Keegan attended an invasive species program at the Forest Society on August 19th. One presentation from the Pittsburg, NH area discussed how a Coalition of agencies, funders and landowners were trying to attack the Japanese Knotweed infestation on the banks of the feeder streams at the headwaters of the Connecticut River. The Coalition has put together a pilot program focusing on a specific geographic location and making a long-term commitment to control the Knotweed. Chair Keegan would like to attempt a similar initiative in Boscawen. He has had preliminary discussions with Alan Hardy, Conservation Commission Chair, Public Works Director Hollins, and Mr. Abbe. All expressed an interest. Chair Keegan distributed a PowerPoint presentation that explains the project in detail. No further discussion.
- USDA Report on the status of Agriculture in New Hampshire: Chair Keegan presented a USDA report that summarizes agriculture in NH. Mr. Tillman will scan the report and email it to all Commissioners for review.
- Network Café: Deputy PCD Director O'Brien presented a Harvest Festival idea for community involvement. She suggested cohosting the festival with Economic Development and the Conservation Commission. It would have activities for families, local vendors, promoting agriculture, and food. Deputy PCD Director O'Brien suggested partnering with Merrimack County 4H and the Northern Rail Trail as well. For activities she suggested a pumpkin carving contest, corn chowder or chili cook off and a pie eating contest. Deputy PCD Director O'Brien spoke with the Economic Development Committee last night about joining the festival to promote local businesses and farmers as well as do job fair outreach. The night would end with the Parks and Recreation movie night. Chair Keegan asked what Economic Development gave for feedback. The Committee liked the idea, and they identified local businesses they could ask to participate. Deputy PCD Director O'Brien said the festival could also serve as a hub for donating excess vegetables to local food pantries. She suggested having people only use NH Gleans produce for the chili cook-off to promote agriculture. There could be a receipt to show that an agricultural product was purchased locally. Vice Chair Porter asked where the site would be. It would be located at Jamie Welch Park. Deputy PCD Director O'Brien proposed October 14th as the date for next year. Discussion ensued. Deputy PCD Director O'Brien will streamline the event schedule and bring the ideas to Economic Development to make decisions.

- Movie Night 2022: Deputy PCD Director O'Brien asked the Commissioners if they want a table at this year's Movie night. All concurred. Deputy PCD Director O'Brien suggested materials such as the rack cards and composting magnets and other information be available. Mr. Sanborn, Mr. Tillman, and Vice Chair Porter volunteered to help at the table.

Tasks for September:

- Deputy PCD Director O'Brien will streamline ideas and organization of the Harvest Festival.
- Deputy PCD Director O'Brien will reach out to GMI for the hard packing of the rail trail.
- Deputy PCD Director O'Brien will send a Google Link of pictures to finalize the Master Plan.
- Vice Chair Porter will review the Penacook Welcome Sign.
- Chair Keegan will discuss Routes 3 and 4 feedback with Bill Lambert.
- Mr. Tillman will scan the USDA report and email to all members.

Next Meeting:

Thursday, October 13th, 2022 @ 6:30 PM

Adjournment:

Motion to adjourn by Mr. Sanborn. Seconded by Mr. Tillman. All in favor. None opposed.

Respectfully submitted, Hannah Gardner