

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

Members Present: John Keegan – Chair, John Porter-Vice Chair, Roger Sanborn, Gary Tillman, Bill Bevans, Ralph Odell, Julie Fournier-Alternate & Kara Gallagher -Planning and Community Development Assistant

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

Roll Call complete.

Review and Acceptance of Prior Meeting Minutes: Mr. Gary Tillman noted one correction, line 60, change ‘ships’ to ‘chips’.

Vice Chair John Porter noted one correction, line 103, change ‘...one in four locals’ to ‘...one in four locations.’

Mr. Tillman motioned to approve the 11.10.22 draft minutes as amended. Seconded by Mr. Roger Sanborn. All in favor. None opposed.

Financial Report:

Mr. Tillman motioned to approve the Financial Report through 12.08.22 as presented. Seconded by Mr. Ralph Odell. All in favor. None opposed.

Public Hearing: *Law Amendments*

- The public hearing will be rescheduled. Chair Keegan noted the lawyers need to review changes first.

Mr. Sanborn motioned to approve a continuation of the public hearing to January 10th. Seconded by Mr. Odell. All in favor. None opposed.

Old Business:

- **Welcome to Boscawen Sign Maintenance:** Chair Keegan stated Mr. Jeff Abbe took down the seasonal agriculture signs. He asked members to monitor the maintenance of the signs. Vice Chair Porter suggested assigning members to monitor the condition of the signs. He will take care of sign maintenance. Mr. Sanborn will monitor North Water St and Rabbit Rd. Chair Keegan will monitor the sign on Andy Morrill’s property and the Circle sign. Mr. Tillman will monitor the Penacock sign, Mr. Bevans will monitor the Salisbury sign, and Mr. Odell will monitor the Franklin sign.

Chair Keegan reported the sign in the Select Board meeting room that was donated to be used on Tremont St. The Select Board asked the Beautification Committee to decide where to place it. The Committee recommended placing the sign just above the junction with Commercial St. Public Works Director Dean Hollins will install the sign. Chair Keegan will ask for clarification on the maintenance responsibility. Vice-Chair Porter asked if this might be a prototype with which to replace the current signs. Chair Keegan responded the company is located in Boscawen and the purchase would support a local business.

- Annual Report: AgCom members were asked to complete their assignments for the Annual Report by Christmas. Chair Keegan said members can find their assignments in Mr. Bevan's notes for the November meeting and that were sent via email. He will then send the draft report to Vice Chair Porter to compose the final report.
- 2023 Budget: Chair Keegan opened discussion on the 2023 AgCom budget. Mr. Bevans suggested keeping the budget the same for 2023. Vice Chair Porter asked about rolling over garden funds for the Commission's use rather than going into the general fund. Chair Keegan said his understanding is that any yearly income for garden plots not used for garden related expenses in that year go back into the general fund. The Commission would need to ask for these funds to be retained for the use by the Agricultural Commission. Mr. Tillman asked if the AgCom budget was funded by taxpayers. Mr. Bevans clarified that the budget was funded by taxpayers. The only outside income is from plot rentals, but they are not applied to the Commission's budget because they are restricted to garden related expenses. Chair Keegan recalled the recent Old Home Day expenditure for prize money. The Commission requested the funds be sourced from garden line item, where most of the available funds were. We were told this line item can only be expended for garden related expenses. Chair Keegan clarified this request would be to roll over funds for the general use of AgCom. Discussion ensued. Mr. Tillman suggested holding the full amount in an annual Capital Fund. The money set aside would be used to enhance the gardens and Town signage.

Mr. Bevans motioned to keep the AgCom Budget at \$1,500 for 2023. Seconded by Mr. Sanborn. All in favor. None opposed.

Mr. Tillman motioned to approve Chair Keegan to go before the Select Board for approval to carry over money generated by the garden plot use into an annual Capital Reserves Fund, only to be used by the Agricultural Commission. Seconded by Vice Chair Porter. All in favor. None opposed.

- Other: Mr. Sanborn will draft 'Thank You' letters to Mr. Jeff Abbe and Ms. Nancy Towle to show gratitude for all the hard work they do for the town.

New Business:

- Joe Pustizzi's Collaboration: Chair Keegan, following-up on Mr. Odell's information on refugee farmers in the Concord area, contacted Joe Pustizzi to ask about his work with these farmers. Mr. Pustizzi leased 13 acres of his property to a refugee organization, ORIS, based in Bedford that is also working with the farmers in Concord Mr. Odell had identified. The farmers working this property sell at farmers markets in Concord as well as Manchester's Food Hub and CSA's. Their produce distributor is located in the Manchester area. Currently there are 3+ acres under cultivation with 4 individuals working the land. The cultivation includes vegetables, fruit trees, blueberries and some cut flowers. Chair Keegan said next year they plan to add 4 more acres to the cultivated area. A gentleman named Anthony manages ORIS which is at the center of these refugee farmer initiatives. Chair Keegan reported that Anthony was able to secure a grant to support one person to work in the Pustizzi Farm's Farm Stand as part of their lease agreement next summer. ORIS sells vegetables produced on this and other farms in the Concord area. Chair Keegan suggested Mr. Pustizzi reach out to the Agricultural Commission next year as a publicity resource when the Farm Stand opens. The Commission might be able to promote the organization through newspaper articles, the town's website and Facebook page.

- Other: Chair Keegan shared an article in the *Concord Monitor* pertaining to farming diversity approaches in Vermont. Discussion ensued.
- Mr. Odell attended a tour at Brookford Farm, in Canterbury. The owner reported that in 2021, they planted between 4 to 5 acres of carrots that yielded 150,000 pounds. Mr. Odell was curious how much organic, locally produced carrots were worth if sold directly to consumers.
- Mr. Odell noted there will be a podcast by Farmland Trust available on December 20th. It will be a four-part series through January. The series will discuss expanding land ownership of farms and housing.
- Chair Keegan started a discussion on the confirmation of Commissioner Jasper. Vice Chair Porter stated the reappointment was controversial, but it ended in a 3 to 1 vote in favor by the Executive Council. Chair Keegan read there may have been a generational conflict involving younger individuals with different ideas. Vice Chair Porter felt it was more a party line conflict rather than generational. Vice Chair Porter said the Commissioner didn't involve his advisory committee as had been the practice with previous Commissioners. He also observed COVID might have been a factor. Discussion ensued. Vice Chair Porter said overall it was constructive, providing incentives for the Commissioner to improve in the future.
- The Committee discussed future projects. Mr. Sanborn suggested having a Draft Horse plowing contest, where plows race at Old Home Day. There would be about 12 teams. Mr. Tillman suggested hosting it on a different day than OHD. Mr. Sanborn said they might do it the day after. The Commissioners will continue to discuss projects at the next meeting.

Mr. Bevans motioned to adjourn. Seconded by Mr. Tillman. All in favor. None opposed.

Next Meeting and Public Hearing:

- Tuesday January 10th, 2023 @ 6:30 p. m.

Respectfully submitted, Hannah Gardner