

**Town of Boscawen
AGRICULTURAL COMMISSION
Boscawen Municipal Complex
FINAL MEETING MINUTES
Tuesday, February 14th, 2023, at 6:30 PM**

Members Present: John Keegan – Chair, John Porter-Vice Chair, Roger Sanborn, Gary Tillman, Bill Bevans, Ralph Odell & Julie Fournier-Alternate

Staff Present: Kara Gallagher—Planning & Community Development Assistant and Kearsten O’Brien—Deputy Planning & Community Development Director

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

Roll Call complete.

Review and Acceptance of Prior Meeting Minutes:

- Chair Keegan noted one correction, line 33, add ‘the’ between ‘...into record’.
- Chair Keegan requested one change, line 112, add ‘the’ between ‘...on Federal...’.

Mr. Gary Tillman motioned to approve the 01.10.23 draft minutes as amended. Seconded by Mr. Ralph Odell. All in favor. None opposed.

Financial Report:

Mr. Tillman motioned to approve the Financial Report through 02.14.23 as presented. Seconded by Mr. Bill Bevans. All in favor. None opposed.

AgComm Account: The Commission would like to open a new AgComm account. Chair Keegan noted RSA 674:44-E which identified what an Agricultural Commission is in terms of state law.

Agricultural Commission may be established in accordance with RSA 673 from the proper recognition, promotion, enhancement, encouragement, use, management, protection, cultural and historic, and community significance within the natural build and contextual and cultural context. The word ‘agriculture’ shall include the RSA 21:34-A for the definition of farm, agriculture, and farming.

Chair Keegan received feedback from Vice Chair John Porter and Mr. Bevans. Vice Chair Porter suggested adding support for agricultural signage instead of the Welcome to Boscawen signage to broaden their use. Mr. Porter also recommended to include improving the visibility of agriculture and funding to attract new and experimental agriculture. Mr. Bill Bevans suggested removing the scholarship possibility from this funding source. Mr. Porter agreed, noting there isn’t much money, and that it should be used for tangible items that the Commission could get credit for. Mr. Bevans noted that working with other committees should not include funding prizes. Ms. Julie Fournier asked what prizes the AgComm had provided. Mr. Bevans responded money on the Old Home Day sheep cut-outs. Planning & Community Development Assistant Kara Gallagher noted the Commission allotted up to \$300. Mr. Bevans recommended that the funds be used mostly to upgrade, repair, and maintain tools, equipment, and the shed at the community garden. Chair Keegan suggested substituting the word ‘prioritize’ for ‘mostly’. All concurred. Mr. Bevans suggested only doing research that pertains to the garden. He referred to the line that read ‘to attract new and experimental agricultural enterprises in Boscawen’. He said additional money should not be given to new farmers to experiment or as an incentive to come to

Boscawen. Mr. Tillman stated the Commission should fund the community garden and anything that brings attention to agricultural business in town. Chair Keegan suggested keeping funding broad because the future is unpredictable. He noted the Commission needs to give Boscawen the possibility to be competitive with other towns. The garden is not the only project AgComm will be working on in the future. There has been discussion about an invasives project with the Conservation Commission and Public Works. Chair Keegan noted AgComm should prioritize the community garden with an ability to fund other projects related to agriculture. Vice Chair Porter suggested removing the phrase ‘funding to attract new and experimental agricultural enterprises’. All concurred.

Mr. Bevans motioned to approve the new fund’s purpose to include the support for agricultural signage, prioritize improvements to the Community Garden, to carry out shared projects with other committees or commissions related to agriculture. Furthermore, support all things agriculture. Seconded by Mr. Roger Sanborn. All in favor. None opposed.

Old Business:

- February Tasks: Deputy PCD Director O’Brien will track the February tasks.
- Resignation: Chair Keegan read Ms. Tatyanna Wunschel’s resignation into record. PCD Assistant Gallagher will update legal on Ms. Wunschel’s resignation. Vice Chair Porter asked if Commissioners should be looking for other youth to join the Commission. Mr. Bevans will reach out to an interested individual in town. Deputy PCD Director Kearsten O’Brien informed the Commissioners she had put together a flyer listing the town committees and commissions with information about what they do. She has posted it on Facebook and placed flyers at the Library.

Mr. Tillman motioned to accept Ms. Wunschel’s resignation as an alternate of the Agricultural Commission. Seconded by Mr. Odell. All in favor. None opposed.

- Deputy PCD Director O’Brien noted the *Newsvine* will be ending after February.
- Revised Bylaws: Committee members signed the revised bylaws. PCD Assistant Gallagher said Town Clerk Hoyt will keep the original copy of the bylaws and each Commissioner will receive their copy.
- Membership: The AgCom NH Farm Bureau membership lapsed. The total cost is \$75 which includes all Commissioners.

Mr. Sanborn motioned to renew the NH Farm Bureau membership for the Agricultural Commission. Seconded by Vice Chair Porter. All in favor. None opposed.

- Draft Horse Event: Mr. Tillman brought the Draft Horse event idea to the Old Home Day Committee (OHD). The OHD Committee would like to have the event but not on Old Home Day, August 26th. Mr. Sanborn proposed holding the event the Sunday prior, August 20th from 10am to 2pm at his farm. This event would include a plowing contest, harrowing, time for parents and children to drive the horses, etc. Mr. Sanborn has or will find sponsors to cover incidental expenses. Discussion ensued. Mr. Sanborn will reach out to Stacia Langille, a local farrier, who is interested in getting involved with the town. The event will be staffed by the Commissioners and advertised as part of OHD.

Vice Chair Porter motioned to approve the Draft Horse event on Sunday August 20th, from 10am to 2pm under the recognition of Old Home Day. Seconded by Mr. Odell. All in favor. None opposed.

- *Right to Repair:* Chair Keegan discussed the ‘Right to Repair’ article published in the Concord Monitor. At a meeting last year, the Commissioners discussed a bill that had been proposed for ‘Right to Repair’ in the NH Legislature but the bill was defeated. Discussion ensued. Mr. Sanborn will reach out to Mr. Adam Crete about the ‘Right to Repair’ issues. If appropriate, Chair Keegan will write a letter in support of the concept to Boscawen’s two Representatives in the legislature. All concurred.

New Business:

- *Invasive Initiative:* Chair Keegan spoke with Mr. Alan Hardy—Chair of the Conservation Commission about the invasive species initiative. They agreed to hold an initial meeting in March to learn more from Fish & Game personnel about the framework of their invasive Plant Management Projects. Chair Keegan noted Public Works Director, Dean Hollins, has money in the Public Works budget for expenses related to invasive control. Public Works identified a small Knotweed infestation on Chadwick Hill Road last fall. After it was treated with herbicide, the area was covered with heavy duty black plastic and topped with clean wood chips. Chair Keegan reported that this technique of fall spraying, covering with black plastic and a deep layer of wood chips has been successful at the Community Garden.
- *Annual Calendar:* Chair Keegan and PCD Assistant Gallagher created a draft annual AgComm Calendar as a guide for anticipating and dealing with obligations that recur annually. Commissioners critiqued the draft with the following revisions: Vice Chair Porter added sign inspections in July. Deputy PCD Director O’Brien noted the Community Garden officially opens April 1st and closes October 31st. Mr. Tillman suggested including the Old Home Day event in August. PCD Assistant Gallagher suggested moving the NH Farm Bureau Membership renewal to January along with the annual revision of the garden application. She will revise and share the updated calendar with the Commissioners.

Other Business:

- Mr. Odell attended the NOFA conference to gather more information about how agriculture is taught in the classroom as well as network with other producers and agriculturally oriented organizations. He provided the following information: Schools have taken on different initiatives. There are after school programs such as the Boys and Girls Club that have gardening clubs. At the elementary level, some schools have their own gardening clubs. There aren’t clubs for junior high and high school. Some schools have field trips in the springtime to dairy farms. Mr. Odell recommended the Cornucopia project in Peterborough. The program started 10 years ago, and they now have 9 elementary schools involved with gardening, nutrition, cooking and agricultural education. For junior high and high school, they offer a farm program where students can work on a farm during the summer. Mr. Odell had the opportunity to meet Emma Richmond-Boudewyns—Sales Manager at the Pustizzi Farm called Fresh Start. Mr. Odell suggested meeting with her to discuss ways the Commission could work with Fresh Start.
- Chair Keegan shared an article related to support local slaughtering and processing facilities. It is from a national advocacy organization, National Sustainable Agricultural Coalition (NSAC). This proposal, in the new Farm Bill, includes potential funding for these services but needs broad support to be included in a revision the Committee will support. Chair Keegan said supporters

want the funding to go to places like NH where there's little local slaughter and processing capacity. NSAC offered two options for supporting the bill: contact our local Congressperson or sign on directly to support the act. Vice Chair Porter asked for more detail on the bill's use of the funding to insure we were not supporting a study but funding that invests directly to improve local and regional slaughter house services and infrastructure. The Market Bulletin had an announcement stating there has been a change in ownership, not additional capacity, at a local slaughterhouse.

- Chair Keegan shared an article from *Country Folks* about the newest developments in agriovoltaics. It involved putting up solar panels in the fences around pastures. The article discussed other new designs for pasture options that are also less intrusive. The concept is to combine agricultural land use with solar power generation.
- Chair Keegan highlighted a passage in the NHDAMF article called 'List your Farm, Wholesale or Garden Center'. Mr. Tillman suggested posting it on the town's website.
- Mr. Bevans spoke at the Public Hearing on the Route 4 subdivision. He used the Agriculture Commission's name in the discussion. Mr. Bevans made those present aware that there is a poultry farm across the street and there is a possibility there will be more odor due to the chickens. Tom Giovagnoli currently has 20,000 chickens and plans to grow his flock. Mr. Bevans told those present the farm will continue to operate. The subdivision was approved for 4-lots. PCD Assistant Gallagher clarified it is a land subdivision, there are no buildings proposed as of now. Deputy PCD Director O'Brien noted the town has received complaints in the past about farm smells. Boscawen has an AR zone, so people have the right to farm. Residents can send written complaints but there's nothing in Boscawen's Zoning Ordinance about odors. Discussion ensued.
- PCD Assistant Gallagher asked why they need to wait until after town meeting to send out garden applications. Deputy PCD Director O'Brien said that, in the past, many early 'sign-ups' backed out causing an issue with refunds and plot availability. PCD Assistant Gallagher noted Town meeting is March 14th and the garden opens April 1st. Deputy PCD Director O'Brien responded the review should be done in January or February. Chair Keegan said they will review and update the prior year's applications and related material in January.
- Planning & Community Development: Deputy PCD Director O'Brien gave an update on Planning Board. The 4-lot subdivision on High St was approved. There were no future plans discussed for 50 to 80 house lots. The phasing plan for the GMI pit off of Queen St has moved to the next phase and they are currently working behind Corn Hill Rd. Residents in that area may be feeling the effects of blasting, crushing, etc. Mr. Dave Caron presented a conceptual for construction off Tremont St. Deputy PCD Director O'Brien said he will present a submission for a Planned Unit Development next month. Planning Board approved a boarding and lodging house at 109 High St. There are 9 bedrooms and they met the criteria for parking spaces with 14 spots. The old Piontkowski pit on Commercial St has changed ownership. Next month the new owners will bring a site plan for changing the name on the excavation permit. The property across from the Smoke Shack has a major site plan and conditional use permit for a 16-unit apartment building. They plan to take down the yellow house and rebuild. There is also a Conditional Use Permit for a proposed duplex on Sweatt St.
- Deputy PCD Director O'Brien gave an update on the Economic Development Committee (EDC). The Fall Festival will be hosted at Avaloch on October 14th. There will be indoor and outdoor

events. The idea would be to promote local businesses. Deputy PCD Director O'Brien encouraged farmers to attend to promote agriculture. She will reach out to farms listed on the Rack Card. The Committee also discussed a Tax Increment Finance (TIF) District on Commercial St and the effects it would have with redeveloping the area. They are hoping to raise funds to fix infrastructure, provide water and sewer. PCD Assistant Gallagher noted to refer to the EDC meeting minutes for more information on the TIF District discussion.

- Deputy PCD Director O'Brien asked for ideas on ways AgComm can be involved in the Parks and Recreation summer program. She previously discussed a field trip to the Community Garden, but Merrimack Valley School District will not be supplying buses this year. The kids will take a field trip to Highway View farm, but Parks and Recreation would like more ideas for field trips related to agriculture.

Other:

- Mr. Odell shared a bill related to home composting. The Commission has previously discussed encouraging people to compost at home. The bill was proposed to keep food out of landfills. They would require that anyone producing over a ton per week would have to find an alternate disposal source. There was a second bill that would give up to \$2 million for communities and businesses to come up with a way to use the funds. Vice Chair Porter noted there are movements underway in New England to channel manure and food waste to methane manure generator systems. Middlebury College has brought tons of waste from throughout New England to help run their methane generator. No further discussion.

Next Meeting

- Monday March 13th, 2023 @ 6:30 p.m.

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

Respectfully submitted, Hannah Gardner