

Town of Boscawen
Agricultural Commission
Meeting Minutes – Final
Boscawen Municipal Complex – 4th Floor Meeting Room
July 13, 2017 at 7pm

Members Present: John Keegan – Chair, Bill Bevans – Vice-Chair, Joshua Marshall, John Porter, Tina Larochelle

Members Absent: Roger Sanborn

Alternate Member Absent: Ken Marshall

Others Present: Alan Hardy – Planning & Community Development Director, Katie Phelps – Recording Secretary, Rusty Colby – Guest.

Chairman Keegan called the meeting to order at 7:00pm with a voting board.

Roll call made by Chairman Keegan.

Chairman Keegan introduced guest Rusty Colby. Mr. Colby is attending a meeting to see if he may be interested in joining the Agricultural Commission as a member.

Review and Acceptance of Prior Meeting Minutes:

The Commission reviewed meeting minutes from the June 8, 2017 meeting. Commission members suggested a few edits.

Motion made by Joshua Marshall and seconded by Tina Larochelle to accept the minutes from the June meeting as amended. All in favor.

Accountant's Report:

The Commission reviewed the Treasurer's Report from January 1st thru July 13, 2017. \$2,947.48 has been spent from the Community Garden budget line. Garden plot fees collected to date total \$600.00.

Motion made by Tina Larochelle and seconded by Joshua Marshall to accept the Accountant's report. All in favor.

Land Use Updates:

- Membership Updates:

Chairman Keegan said that the Commission voted to nominate Bill Bevans as Vice-Chair and John Porter as a regular commissioner at the last meeting. The Commission needs to vote to accept the nominations.

Motion made by Tina Larochelle and seconded by Joshua Marshall to accept the nominations for Bill Bevans as Vice-Chair and John Porter as a regular commissioner. All in favor.

- Property Tax Discussion:

Alan Hardy said his office and the Ag Comm are trying to help Tom Giovagnoli with his tax bill, in the context of identifying tax relief tools to help a particular market segment – i.e. – Agricultural enterprises. For example, the Tax Incremental Financing (TIF) is an option that can be turned on with voter approval at Town Meeting but about which we need to better educate ourselves. Alan will be looking for these educational resources. In Mr. Giovagnoli's case, it appears that the early financial research did not

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recognize the property tax implications of this endeavor. Research has now been done by town officials that indicates Mr. Giovagnoli has not filed paperwork for the 20% current use recreation discount – which would help lower the tax bill. Town officials have looked at other barns in Monroe of similar age and use which are actually taxed at a higher amount. Other questions have been raised about definitions to distinguish between equipment and structure, for example, “What is a silo?” Is it part of the building or equipment? How much of the interior is part of the barn vs. equipment? The discussion will continue beginning in August with Rob Johnson from NH Farm Bureau. He will be invited to discuss details related to RSA 79-E *Community Revitalization Tax Relief Incentive* (See Below). Josh Marshall is arranging Rob’s attendance.

Chairman Keegan talked about turning on 79-E. Alan said 79-E is land under building and is not used to stabilize things. It has to be Town approved because tax payers have to agree to take on the financial burden of what is being proposed – in this case it may be to support agriculture. It requires a majority vote. Discussion ensued.

As the Commissioners educate themselves, options will be discussed with other boards and commissions and, ultimately a recommendation made to the Board of Selectmen, should viable options be identified.

Old Business:

- Agricultural Rack Card:

The Commission reviewed the most recent version of the Rack Card. Commissioners suggested a few minor corrections and spelling changes. Josh said that he has yet to get the picture updated but that he intends to do so now that the card has its final text updates for the first printing.

Motion made by Tina Laroche and seconded by Bill Bevans to approve the Agricultural Rack Card based on Josh’s updates. All in favor.

- Educational Program – Update:

Chairman Keegan said the original plan was to have Jeremy Delisle attend this month’s meeting but he was already committed to an official education program out of state. He will attend next month. The only scheduled education is next Monday, July 17th, for an Integrated Pest Management talk at the Community Garden with Ann LaCroix. His suggestion would be to hold off on any program in August and see what can be done in September. Chairman Keegan’s suggestion was agreed to by all present.

Community Garden – Update:

Chairman Keegan spoke with Jeff Abbe about the garden shed. Jeff and another volunteer plan to finish the trim work over the weekend. He asked John Porter how the meeting with the Board of Selectmen went a few weeks ago. John Porter said it went well. He thinks the Board of Selectmen appreciated the acknowledgement. Chairman Keegan wanted to make sure that the individuals and businesses were acknowledged in the Board of Selectmen’s minutes. John Porter had handed out a letter and attached a list of names to be acknowledged.

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Katie Phelps said she had a copy of what was submitted to the Board of Selectmen. Alan Hardy said he also noticed that the minutes noted 70 gardeners. Chairman Keegan thought it was 47 gardeners. Katie wasn't sure and will check her list. Jeff Abbe said there are 60 plots and the garden is 70% full.

Chairman Keegan wanted the Selectmen to know that the project was completed and that there was broad support for it. He especially wanted to highlight the Merrimack Valley School District's involvement.

New Business:

- FSMA:

John Porter said he attended the FSMA (Food Safety Modernization Act) presentation earlier today and has an update. He thinks FSMA is having less impact on dairy farmers than it is on vegetable farmers. The big reason is that unprocessed dairy is exempt. FSMA has been incorporated into the PMO (Pasteurized Milk Ordinance). Any commercial farmer already shipping milk is under the PMO umbrella which FSMA recognizes. Also, if you are under a million dollars in sales you are exempt. Anything over that you have to address the full scale FSMA. However, John noted that there was extended discussion, without clarification from federal officials about retail sales and the specific documentation required from producers to, for example, document wholesale versus customer sales. Both Josh Marshall and Rusty Colby noted similar problems in the vegetable and maple sectors respectively. Discussion ensued.

- Knowlton Subdivision and others:

Alan Hardy discussed upcoming major subdivisions in town including one on Knowlton Road. He also discussed the snowmobile trail system in town and options for maintaining a connection to the Rail Trail and proximity to local businesses. Discussion ensued concerning how to encourage landowners to support the trail system and encourage trail riders, including 4 wheelers, to respect the private property they are using.

Motion to adjourn made by Tina Larochelle and seconded by John Porter. All in favor.

The meeting adjourned at 8:10pm.

The next meeting of the Commission is scheduled for August 10, 2017 at 7pm.

Minutes respectfully submitted by Katie Phelps