

Town of Boscawen, NH

AGRICULTURAL COMMISSION

Boscawen Municipal Complex

MEETING MINUTES – APPROVED

Thursday, June 11, 2015

Commissioners Present: John Keegan, Elaine Clow, Angela Swyers, William Bevans, Tina Larochele

Alternate Commissioner Present: Tom Danko

Commissioner Absent (Ex Officio): Roger Sanborn

Alternate Commissioners Absent: Ken Marshall, John Porter

Chairman Keegan called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. and announced that Greg Jones is no longer able to take minutes. Suzanne Beauchesne is now preparing meeting minutes.

Approval of Minutes

Motion was made by Bill Bevans and seconded by Tina Larochele, to approve the minutes of the May 14, 2015 meeting as written. The motion passed unanimously.

Accounting Report

Chairman Keegan reviewed the accounting report effective May 31, 2015. The Community Garden account has gone over budget by close to \$40 but a lot of improvements have been made. The herb garden has been installed. The kiosk has been paid for and there is a good total balance remaining in the amount of \$956.87.

Motion was made by Tina Larochele to accept the Agricultural Commission accounting report as presented. Tom Danko seconded and the motion passed unanimously.

Land Use Happenings

- Questions for Alan Hardy on Energy Alternatives for Agriculture**

Chairman Keegan reported that Alan Hardy was unable to attend tonight's meeting since the Selectmen asked him to attend a 91A training session. Commissioners discussed how it was possible that wintertime produce is marked "grown in Canada". There was much discussion about renewable energy that is the focus in Canada where greenhouses are heated by self-generated power. Chairman Keegan suggested a review of the town's zoning regulations and perhaps meeting with Granite State Solar, a commercial enterprise in Boscawen.

Bill Bevans spoke of his experience with solar energy. Ms. Swyers stated that Canadian and German farmers are very progressive and that has a huge impact on the environment. Attendees felt it was worth looking into further. Vice Chairwoman Clow will talk with Katherine at Bookends. Chairman Keegan will invite Granite State Solar to the Agriculture Commission's next meeting to discuss the matter.

Action Plan: Vice Chairwoman Clow will talk with Katherine at Bookends about attending the next Agricultural Commission meeting. Chairman Keegan will invite a Granite State Solar representative to the Agricultural Commission's next meeting to discuss the matter. He will also contact Adam Crete and Tom Giovagnoli about attending as well.

- **Formulation of Recommendation to Planning Board regarding Site Review**

In follow-up to last month's discussion on the Site Review process for new agricultural projects, Chairman Keegan noted that Bruce Crawford, Chairman of the Planning Board, indicated that the type of changes the Planning Board would want to consider are not farm stands and other like entities that are already in an agricultural zone and not a new use. Changes such as the conversion of a farm with little or no public interaction to a riding stable where there is public participation that would likely increase traffic is a change that might require a site review. Bill Bevans indicated that it must come before the Planning Board if it is a commercial enterprise. There followed a protracted discussion that ended when Chairman Keegan suggested postponing further discussion to get Bruce Crawford's and/or Alan Hardy's perspective. All attendees agreed.

- **Agritourism Discussion**

Chairman Keegan brought up proposed legislation, SB 354, which describes agritourism as the act of visiting a working farm or any agricultural operation to enjoy, be educated, or entertained. Some activities include: farm tours for families, day camps, hands-on chores, self-harvesting of produce, hay and sleigh rides, bed and breakfast operations. Chairman Keegan asked Commissioners how to approach the matter in terms of zoning and felt the bill did not do a good job of making the link between tourism and agriculture or contemplate changes in agriculture. Twenty five years ago, for example, farming talk did not include wineries and wine tastings. A number of Commissioners felt that the focus was not on agriculture but on tourism. Agritourism is meant to help farmers supplement their income.

Chairman Keegan would like to include a definition that is consistent with the Master Plan, and suggested that Commissioners "google" agritourism and review the links provided in the meeting packet and come prepared to further discuss the issue at next month's meeting.

New Business:

Chairman Keegan announced that Josh Marshall is now working at the New Hampshire Farm Bureau as their Director of Communications. Mr. Marshall has indicated that as he goes around the State, many in the farm community are very much aware that Boscawen is a farm-friendly town.

Community Kitchen. Chairman Keegan reviewed the final draft of the Commercial Kitchen Feasibility Study which has not yet gotten USDA's blessing. The study evaluated the need and demand for a shared use kitchen in the area. The study interviewed 28 farms and found low interest for a shared-use kitchen. Farms are looking for season extenders. The study included a break even analysis and sample budget for operating a shared use kitchen. Commissioners felt that it would be in the best interest of the community to focus its energy and resources on upgrading the kitchen at town hall which can serve broader town

services. Chairman Keegan will meet with the Board of Selectmen to present the results of the study and suggest possible ways to move forward.

Old Business:

- **Welcome Signs**

Chairman Keegan stated that two signs still needed to be put up but it is not currently on Dean Hollins' priority list. The Town needs the State's permission to change the location on Water Street because it is a State road. This has not been a problem in the past but it is not on Dean Hollins' priority list. A new location needs to be identified and recognition given to Mr. Parker, Avaloch Farm Music Institute, Charlie Needling, and Bernie Davis for their donations. John Porter has written a draft for a newspaper article. He and Alan have tried to get something in the Concord Monitor.

- **Legislative Update** – Nothing new to report.
- **Educational Program**

Vice Chairwoman Elaine Clow reported that Jessica Sprague, a Cooperative Extension Service Grafton County food safety specialist, will provide a food safety workshop in August. She is also setting up a winter program on food safety. In July Betsy Fazio, as master gardener, will be presenting a workshop on growing strawberries. IPM, presented by Cindy Saka, another master gardener, got moved up by three weeks but was still well attended (see below). Dot Perkins, a Cooperative Extension specialist, presented a program on chickens. She is always able to draw a crowd. Vice Chairwoman Clow is looking for ideas for the fall. John Porter is developing a new Barn program.

Vice Chair Clow read a letter prepared by her and Chairman Keegan to Amy Ouellette at UNH Extension regarding the lack of in-depth content of the Integrated Pest Management (IPM) workshop that was held on May 11th. Chairman Keegan will follow-up with Ms. Ouellette prior to the July meeting.

Action Plan: Chairman Keegan will follow-up with Ms. Ouellette.

- **Community Garden**

Chairman Keegan reported that of the 36 plots available, 34 are in use. Chairman Keegan also suggested to the Garden Committee that the two remaining plots could be used to grow vegetables for the food pantry. Vice Chairman Clow suggested calling Charlie Cole who provided many plants last year that the school used. Chairman Keegan will talk to the Garden Committee who have been doing good work. The herb garden is nearly completed. Chairman Keegan noted that when driving by on Corn Hill Road, many people are working on their plots.

Action Plan: Angela Swyers was asked to contact Cole Gardens to ask if there are plants available this year.

A motion to adjourn was made by Vice Chairwoman Elaine Clow and was seconded by Tina Larochele at 8:42 p.m. All Commission members approved and the meeting ended.

The next regular meeting of the Agricultural Commission will be held on July 9th, 2015 at 7:00 p.m.

Minutes are respectfully submitted by Suzanne Beauchesne