

Town of Boscawen, NH

AGRICULTURAL COMMISSION

Boscawen Municipal Complex

MEETING MINUTES – APPROVED

Thursday, August 13, 2015

Commissioners Present: John Keegan, Elaine Clow, William Bevans, Tina Larochelle

Alternate Commissioners Present: Tom Danko, John Porter

Commissioner Absent: Angela Swyers

Commissioner Absent (Ex Officio): Roger Sanborn

Alternate Commissioner Absent: Ken Marshall

Others present: Heather Wunschel, Ann Dominguez, Bruce Crawford, Chairman of the Planning Board, Alan Hardy, Planning and Community Development Director

Chairman Keegan called the meeting to order at 7:02 p.m. and appointed Tom Danko to voting status.

Approval of Minutes

Motion was made by Tina Larochelle and seconded by Bill Bevans to approve the minutes of the July 9, 2015 meeting as written. The motion passed unanimously.

Accounting Report

Chairman Keegan reviewed the accounting report effective July 31, 2015. Alan Hardy noted the negative balance of (\$324.80) in the Community Garden budget line. Chairman Keegan stated that some expenses such as Peter Satterfield and Barter's Small Engine, are one-time expenses and will not re-occur next year. There will be continued irrigation expenses but they will not be as great as this year. Chairwoman Clow noted that income of \$15.00 for her garden plot fees was not included in the report, and stated that some monies for speakers will be used next month out of the Administration budget line.

Motion was made by Elaine Clow to postpone review of the July accounting report to the September meeting. Tina Larochelle seconded and the motion passed unanimously.

Land Use Happenings

Horse Riding Stable: Chairman Keegan welcomed Heather Wunschel and Ann Dominguez. Ms. Wunschel is planning to open a horse riding stable on Ann Dominguez' land on Corn Hill Road. According to Alan Hardy the property is not zoned for housing horses and that a special exemption, which can only be done at town meeting, would be required to get the area zoned from R1 to an agricultural zone. Ms. Wunschel lives in Franklin, has an autistic son and is looking to give back by way of therapeutic riding. She distributed photos, has prepared a business plan, and is looking for a second horse. Ms. Wunschel is a certified riding instructor. She said her horse's name is Sandy and is an amazing horse. Ms. Dominguez indicated that she is donating the use of her land and is happy to be able to contribute to a good cause. Chairman Keegan suggested a site visit so that a recommendation could be made to the Zoning

Board of Adjustment. Friday afternoon or Saturday is a good time, or the middle of the day is usually best for Ms. Wunschel, and preferably before school starts on August 26th.

ACTION PLAN: Chairman Keegan asked Tina Larochelle and John Porter to conduct a site visit, and check in with Ms. Swyers to see if she is interested in joining them. Ms. Wunschel will prepare “special exemption” forms for two horses.

Solar Power:

Kathleen Nevins, Owner of Book Ends in Warner, was unable to attend the meeting to discuss her solar power system from a consumer’s point of view. Discussion will be scheduled for the September Commission meeting.

Agritourism Discussion:

Commission members agreed to meet with Upton & Hatfield attorneys on September 10th at 6:00 p.m. pending their availability. This discussion will be followed by the Agricultural Commission meeting at 7:00 p.m.

Bruce Crawford reported on the Agritourism Study Committee in which he participates. The legislation, SB 354, was introduced by Senator Boutin and includes a wide range of uses. Cordell Johnston, lobbyist for the NH Municipal Association, has drafted and submitted some exceptions. Another meeting of the Study Committee is scheduled for August 18th.

New Business:

Stratham Visit/AgComm Development:

Chairman Keegan reported that he was contacted by the Rockingham County Planning Commission to make a visit to Stratham where a problem arose pitting the agricultural community against town officials because zoning changes were made without input from the farm community. Chairman Keegan, Vice Chairwoman Clow, Alternate Commissioner John Porter, and Planning Board Chair Bruce Crawford attended a meeting in Stratham with the Chairman of the Planning Board and others. A new town planner and new building inspector are operating “by the book” as opposed to the “laissez-faire” attitude of previous staff. The Boscawen representatives felt well-received. Bruce Crawford suggested that it would behoove the Stratham Planning Board to reach out to the agricultural community. Town’s people would have to vote at town meeting on establishing an Agricultural Commission.

Other:

Chairman Keegan indicated that Kellee Jo Easler, Planning and Community Development Assistant, sent out a memo regarding the Capital Improvement Program process. Alan Hardy, Planning and Community Development Director, stated that the CIP process occurs annually to review capital expenses pending or expected that are over \$10,000.

ACTION ITEM: Chairman Keegan will inform Kellee Easler that the Agricultural Commission will not participate because the Commission has no capital budget although individuals serving on the Commission are welcome to participate.

Farm Bureau Membership

ACTION ITEM: Tina Larochelle moved to renew membership to the Farm Bureau at a fee of \$75 per year. Seconded by Vice Chairwoman Clow and approved unanimously.

Merrimack County Conservation District:

Chairman Keegan distributed an announcement that the Merrimack County Conservation District's fall fundraiser sale is ongoing.

Old Business:

- **Meeting with Lorraine Merrill, Commissioner of Agriculture**

John Porter reported on a meeting held with Commissioner of Agriculture, Markets & Foods, Lorraine Merrill. Chairman Keegan and Bruce Crawford joined him to formally present Commissioner Merrill with the results of the Boscawen Shared Use Commercial Kitchen Feasibility Study. While the results of the study were not as envisioned, the Commission did not want the report sitting on a shelf but preferred making the information available. It was a good meeting and Commissioner Merrill immediately started getting the word out with a Weekly Market Bulletin article which has already generated a buzz. The Town of Warner and others may act on the report's recommendations. Chairman Keegan stated that several people have asked him about the Feasibility Study. On August 20th, Bruce Crawford, he and Charlene Anderson will meet with the Warner Town Administrator, Jim Brigham, Brandon and Mary Sussman from Webster and a representative from the Kearsarge Food Hub to discuss the Feasibility Study. Leon Malan of Colby Sawyer may be in attendance as well. Commissioner Merrill adds credibility to work the Commission has done. On the matter of agritourism, Commissioner Merrill shared some of her concerns which are not dissimilar to those held by many Commission members.

- **Old Home Day**

Vice Chairwoman Elaine Clow stated that the "cow" project has been an "amazing venture". Certificates will be handed out at the Art Show on Tuesday. Old Home Day t-shirts will be for sale. Commissioner Merrill spent about two hours with Vice Chairwoman Clow and loved the idea of the art show, had ice cream at Richardson's, visited Avalock Music School, and their PYO blueberries as well as the proposed chicken farm site.

- **Legislative Update**

Bruce Crawford stated that three pieces of legislation remain on the radar:

HB 499 – deals with the sale of farm raised animals directly to the public. Commissioner Merrill is concerned about it. Backing out exceptions to community health is a concern and the farm community will be the ones to suffer.

HB 466 – this legislation was introduced by Representative Dan McGuire of Epsom and attempts to define husbandry; i.e., farm equipment construed as construction equipment. It is being studied.

HB 372 is problematic in that it exempts small farms from getting workers compensation insurance.

Mr. Crawford did not believe that the Commission needed to weigh in on any legislation at this time.

- **Educational Program**

Vice Chairwoman Clow said that the food preservation presentation held on August 3rd was excellent. It was provided by the new food safety person for Grafton County who was excellent. About a dozen people attended. It seems that if it is Tuesday and a garden presentation is planned, it will rain! The Integrated Pest Management (IPM) program has been rescheduled to Friday, the 14th by Dot Perkins. In September or October Jim Ramenik will make a presentation on mushrooms.

Alan Hardy announced that a new administrative staff, Candace Haithwaite, will be coordinating all educational support at the town office. She has extensive work experience in title work which will lessen the need for Attorney Raymond's time on such matters.

- **Community Garden**

A copy of the Green Thumb Gazette was included in the meeting packet. Sarah Chappelow has been doing a great job getting information out and she will be doing two more editions – one in August and in mid-September when the garden closes.

Charlie Jaworski has mowed the buckwheat. Roger Sanborn will plow it. The garden has had a pretty good year. Frank Laro's sunflowers have grown to 10/12 feet. No complaints heard on the watering concept. Volunteer activity has been much improved, making compost, etc. 34 of the 36 plots are in active use. Ann LaCroix has been a great asset for the herb garden.

Bruce Crawford brought up the Hannah Dustin Island Clean Up and said that the Historical Society and Rail Trail are setting up a Friends Group to help better maintain the island. Vice Chairwoman Clow indicated that the NH Americorp spent five days cleaning it up and did a good job. Chairman Keegan will ask his neighbor, Wendy Barter, if she has a rough terrain mower or knows of one that could be used. If so, she will contact Bruce Crawford with the results of her research.

Vice Chairwoman Clow mentioned that the Historical Society's summer intern has done a lot of work on cross-referencing 1865 to 1896 graves (470) in the pauper cemetery at the County Facility. Amy Papineau and Jim Fleury from the Cooperative Extension Service are planting a perennial pollinator garden in the area.

A motion to adjourn was made by Vice Chairwoman Clow and was seconded by Tina Larochelle. All Commission members approved and the meeting ended at 8:32 p.m.

The next regular meeting of the Agricultural Commission will be held on September 10, 2015 at 7:00 p.m.

Minutes are respectfully submitted by Suzanne Beauchesne