

Town of Boscawen, NH

AGRICULTURAL COMMISSION

Boscawen Municipal Complex

MEETING MINUTES – APPROVED

Thursday, November 12, 2015

Commissioners Present: John Keegan, William Bevans, Angela Swyers, Josh Marshall

Alternate Commissioners Present: John Porter

Commissioners Absent: Elaine Clow, Tina Larochelle

Commissioner Absent (Ex Officio): Roger Sanborn

Alternate Commissioner Absent: Ken Marshall

Others Present: Alan Hardy, Planning and Community Development Director

Chairman Keegan called the meeting to order at 7:07 p.m. and appointed John Porter to voting status. Chairman Keegan welcomed new commission member, Josh Marshall, and stated that Tom Danko will no longer serve as Alternate Commissioner.

Approval of Minutes

Motion was made by Bill Bevans, second by Angela Swyers, to approve the minutes of the October 8, 2015 meeting as amended. The motion passed unanimously. Amendment: Line 23 should read – Chairman Keegan asked....

Accounting Report

A \$15 garden plot fee has not been included on the accounting report. A spreadsheet was found listing that Vice Chairwoman Clow paid cash that may have been blended into a larger bank deposit. Chairman Keegan will review copies of assigned plots that includes a two page agreement and payment information and try to track the payment prior to the December meeting.

Action Plan: Chairman Keegan, with assistance of the Land Use staff will review copies of assigned plots and payment information to resolve the payments status prior to the December meeting.

Land Use Happenings

- **Agritourism Training and Discussion with Planning Board**

Chairman Keegan shared information about the ‘Municipal Zoning for Local Foods in Iowa’ which Theresa Walker had forwarded. It deals with local food production, providing examples of regulatory approaches that people have taken around the country. He felt it was a handy piece of information. Alan Hardy said that NH has more restrictive zoning ordinances in that if “use” is not listed in the Table of Uses, a variance must be applied for.

Chairman Keegan sent around material he gathered at the Municipal Association’s Training Program on Local Regulation of Agriculture. The State of NH does not have a definition for “agritourism” so municipalities are at liberty to regulate agritourism as they wish. As a result of the training, Boscawen

ordinances have been drafted for consideration by voters at town meeting. Changes include: redefining convention center to event center and identifying parcels where farmers markets and flea markets might take place in order to avoid the special exemption requirement. Five parcels were identified: Congregational Church, Jamie Welch Park, Elementary School, the Town Hall, and Municipal Office Complex. All other locations would require a special exemption. Commissioners suggested that the plot where the old police station is located also be included on this list. The Planning Board will schedule public hearings on the matter prior to town meeting.

Bill Bevans moved, second by Josh Marshall, to accept the proposed ordinance changes as presented. Motion passed unanimously.

- **Other**

Chairman Keegan said a discussion concerning the use of Ag Farm plates in town had recently surfaced. According to the Town Clerk, people are claiming to have farm vehicles when they do not. Bruce Crawford, Chairman of the Planning Board, provided more distinction between the two types of plates and said that Town Clerks cannot enforce the statutes – it is a police matter. Compounding the problem is the Department of Motor Vehicles not providing any consistent guidance on how to address the situation. Josh Marshall agreed that it was “nothing we can control”. According to Bruce Crawford, NH Representative Dan Maguire has proposed legislation that would cure part the matter.

Chairman Keegan stated that the Wild and Scenic proposal for the upper Merrimack River has re-surfaced again. Boscawen resident, Bill Murphy, has sent a letter to the Upper Merrimack River Local Advisory Committee (UMRLAC). He provided historical information concerning this proposal; questioned the accuracy of information in the UMRLAC minutes relative to Boscawen as well as questioning the support for Wild and Scenic designation beyond UMRLAC. The town has not supported designation for, among other reasons, that it would remove significant acreage from agricultural production.

Alan Hardy mentioned that a property on Corn Hill Road plans to host horse training for autistic children did not realize that they had lost the AR zoning status and are seeking a Special Exemption. A few property owners in the area want to be zoned AR again.

New Business

Chairman Keegan mentioned that the NH Food Alliance is working with UNH on a series of gatherings focused on the future of food in NH. An event is scheduled on November 17th from 10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. at LaBelle Winery in Amherst. Mr. Keegan cannot attend but thought others may be interested in attending. Mr. Keegan does not believe there is a cost to attend but if there is, the Commission will pick up the expense.

Chairman Keegan also mentioned that Rhoda Hardy would like to include gallons of milk in holiday baskets. Perhaps there is an opportunity for the Agricultural Commission to get involved. Cumberland Farm is helping and has been very supportive. Chairman Keegan suggested that perhaps the Agricultural Commission could get involved via the Community Garden where squash and other food items could be grown and donated.

Action Plan: Referred to the Garden Committee for action.

Old Business

- **Legislative Update**

Bruce Crawford is monitoring two Agritourism bills.

- **Educational Program**

On November 2nd Ann LaCroix talked about “Time to Put your Garden to Bed and Prepare for the Next Year”. It was a good session. Ann is an excellent educator. Elaine Clow continues to look for program ideas. Pending programs are emerald Ash Borer with Tim Fleur and Chickens with Dot Perkins.

- **Community Garden**

Chairman Keegan mentioned that the Community Garden problem with poison ivy and Japanese Knot Weed has resurfaced. Weeds were cut and Round Up applied to part of the Knot Weed. However, the plot where only black plastic and wood chips were applied needed more wood chips, according to Doug Cygan, so the plastic would not be ripped and permit sunlight to reach the Knot Weed roots. The Garden Committee has been working with Prescott Towle for three years to control both plants. Chairman Keegan had proposed in 2014 that DPW staff become certified to handle the situation. Alan Hardy did not feel that using DPW staff would be successful. Chairman Keegan raised the idea of including \$1,800 in the AgComm 2015 budget proposal for invasive plant control using a private contractor. A detailed discussion followed about how and where the spraying would take place. There was consensus that only public land should be treated but no consensus on a budget figure or how a control program would function.

Bill Bevans moved, second by Angela Swyers, to leave the Community Garden budget as is. The motion passed unanimously.

- **Other**

Chairman Keegan asked Angela Swyers the status of the Community Garden sign. Ms. Swyers will check again with Alan Burgess at the Correctional Facilities if it might be possible for his shop to develop.

Next Meeting: December 10, 2015 at 7:00 p.m.

Adjournment

A motion to adjourn was made by Josh Marshall and was seconded by Angela Swyers. All Commission members approved and the meeting ended at 8:45 p.m.

Minutes are respectfully submitted by Suzanne Beauchesne