

**Town of Boscawen  
AGRICULTURAL COMMISSION  
Boscawen Municipal Complex  
FINAL MEETING MINUTES  
Tuesday, June 13<sup>th</sup>, 2023, at 6:30 PM**

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

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

**Guests:** Rob Johnson—Policy Director for NH Farm Bureau

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

Roll Call complete.

**Review and Acceptance of Prior Meeting Minutes:**

- Chair Keegan requested one change, line 42, change ‘Strength’ to ‘Strengthen’.
- Ms. Julie Fournier requested one change, line 44, uncapitalize the word ‘Bill’s’ to read as ‘...Agriculture bill’s...’
- Chair Keegan requested one change, line 104, strike the first word in the sentence, ‘about’.
- Chair Keegan requested one clarification, line 130, Mr. Rob Johnson’s title is Policy Director, not Information Specialist.
- Vice Chair John Porter requested one correction, line 134, change ‘...Senator Waters...’ to ‘...Senator Watters...’.
- Ms. Fournier requested one clarification, line 144, change ‘...another Information Specialist...’ to ‘...another Policy Director...’.
- Chair Keegan requested one correction, line 151, change ‘...as a committee’ to ‘...as a Commission’.

**Mr. Roger Sanborn motioned to approve the 05.09.23 draft minutes as amended. Seconded by Mr. Gary Tillman. All in favor. None opposed.**

**Financial Report:**

Mr. Gary Tillman asked about the number of remaining plots at the Community Garden. Chair Keegan mentioned that when he last spoke with Mr. Jeff Abbe, there were 6 plots available. Planning & Community Development Assistant Kara Gallagher will contact Mr. Abbe to verify the current number of available plots.

**Mr. Tillman motioned to approve the Financial Report through 05.09.23 as presented. Seconded by Mr. Ralph Odell. All in favor. None opposed.**

Chair Keegan congratulated Vice Chair Porter on receiving the Agricultural Adventurers Award. The award is given annually to individuals or families based on innovation, pioneering, and lifelong dedication to improving agriculture. Chair Keegan recognized Mr. Porter's valuable contributions to the Agricultural Commission and expressed gratitude for his significant efforts to improve agriculture.

### **Old Business:**

*MPIPP:* The Agricultural Commission reviewed an article in the Market Bulletin titled 'Meat Processing Infrastructure Program Projects Approved,' which was relevant to the Strengthen Local Processing Act (SLPA) they have been following. Chair Keegan mentioned that the article identified the recipients who were granted funds by the State Department of Agriculture, Markets and Food for local slaughtering and rendering facilities. The Department distributed a total of \$800,000 in grants. Mr. Odell mentioned there was a comment regarding the use of funds for physical improvements that would increase the capacity and expand services. Chair Keegan stated that Mr. Josh Marshall emphasized that physical improvements would be one of the criteria for fund utilization.

*Community Garden:* The Boscawen Community Garden (BCG) will host two workshops during the summer for BCG gardeners and town residents. The first workshop is scheduled for Wednesday, June 21st, from 6:00PM to 8:00PM. Master Gardener Ann Lacroix and Louise Jacob will discuss the best gardening practices, Integrated Pest Management (IPM), mulching, and weeding techniques. The second workshop, titled 'Twilight Culinary Herb Talk,' will take place on Wednesday, July 12th, from 6:00PM to 8:00PM. This session will cover topics such as harvesting, planting methods, and preserving and using kitchen herbs from your own garden or the Community Garden. Mr. Tillman mentioned that the 'BCG Twilight Garden Talks' announcement has been posted on the town website and Facebook Page. Chair Keegan emphasized that both workshops are open to the public and encouraged Commissioners to distribute flyers to interested individuals. No further discussion.

*Draft Horse Event:* Mr. Roger Sanborn provided an update on the August 20th Draft Horse Event. Mr. Dave Heisler will bring his teams from Dunbarton, and another individual from Canterbury will bring their team as well. There will be demonstrations throughout the day and attendees will have the opportunity to drive a team with guidance from their owner. Mr. Sanborn mentioned that on Saturday, June 17th, there will be a dry run for the horses at Twiggs Art Gallery. Two regular horse teams and a couple of singles will be present. On the 17<sup>th</sup> residents can also pick up their chicken cutouts for the *Flashy Flock* Contest. Mr. Sanborn and Ms. Julie Fournier estimated there were around 20 chicken cutouts left. Mr. Jeff Abbe made a total of 60 cutouts for the contest. Deputy PCD Director O'Brien asked about the live chicken demonstration scheduled for June 17th. Chair Keegan noted that Mrs. Adele Sanborn mentioned an educational demonstration with live chickens in their previous conversation. Deputy PCD Director O'Brien will contact Mrs. Sanborn for clarification. Discussion ensued. Chair Keegan confirmed that the Ag Commission will be responsible for securing judges for the *Flashy Flock* Contest.

*NH Farm Bureau:* Mr. Rob Johnson, the Policy Director at NH Farm Bureau, spoke with the Ag Commission about the purpose and activities of the Farm Bureau. Established in 1919 as a nonprofit membership organization, the NHFB was formed county by county across the nation. During that time, the Federal Government believed that creating a farm organization was the way to demonstrate dedication and interest in agriculture within the county. Counties that established Farm Bureaus were provided a county extension agent. Mr. Johnson mentioned that NHFB consists of 10 county Farm Bureau organizations. NHFB members are also members of their respective county organizations. Each county has a board of directors, and some boards include a county extension agent. The NHFB is classified as a

501C5, which grants them the ability to engage in lobbying, a significant aspect of their work. Mr. Johnson is a registered lobbyist who represents the members' interests before the legislature and state government. Additionally, there is a national organization with a full panel of lobbyists representing the NHFB in Washington. Mr. Johnson elaborated on additional key areas of focus for the NHFB. One area of focus was agricultural education. They have a young farmer program aimed at developing young leaders in the agricultural sector. NHFB actively endorses the Agriculture in the Classroom program, which aids teachers in educating 4th-grade students about agriculture. While the program has its own board of directors, the NHFB generously provides the space, covers electricity costs, and handles their payroll. Mr. Johnson highlighted that new members could contribute to this program through the NHFB application. All donations are directed to this program. Each county Farm Bureau operates a scholarship program, which focuses on agricultural education and provides scholarships to post-secondary level students. Mr. Johnson mentioned that the NHFB supports the Abby Sergeant Memorial Scholarship. The organization's goal is to raise funds and grant scholarships annually. Last year, they awarded 4 or 5 scholarships, each worth \$1,000. Mr. Johnson noted that county Farm Bureau's also provide general support to local farmers. Chair Keegan inquired about the legislative initiatives the NHFB supported this year. Mr. Johnson mentioned that during the last session, there were three bills requested by the NHFB. One with game cameras. He explained that three years ago, a bill was introduced to allow immediate use of live action game camera footage for hunting. However, NH Fish and Game mandates a 24-hour waiting period before taking any action on the footage, to ensure fair chase. During the initial hearing, Mr. Johnson stated that they did not take a stance on the fair chase argument, but they did request the Committee consider an amendment similar to a law in Maine. The amendment would require landowner permission before placing a game camera on someone else's property. There is currently no such requirement. Mr. Johnson said there was opposition to the proposal in the last session, and the bill was not approved. During the summer, the NHFB collaborated with Fish and Game, the Wildlife Federation, and NH Timberland Owners Association to develop Senate Bill 14. The Bill successfully passed Senate without any amendments. However, when it reached the House of Representatives, both the Chairman of the Fish and Game Committee and the Chairman of the Criminal Justice Committee expressed their opposition to the bill and their concerns. Mr. Johnson noted four areas of the bill that were changed to accommodate the concerns of these Representatives. The first change was to remove the written landowner permission requirement. Additionally, the bill's immediate effective date was changed to January to allow hunters a year to be educated about the changes in the law. Another modification was to fix wording on the 24-hour waiting period for game cameras, so it reads 'the next day'. A separate bill, related to gaming apps for horse racing, was included in SB14 on the House side but was not approved. On the Senate side, SB14 was added to a bill introduced by the Commissioner of Agriculture, focused on updates to the agricultural land preservation program within the Department of Agriculture. The second bill Mr. Johnson worked on was relative to tree stands. It requires hunters to place their name and contact information on tree stands. Mr. Johnson noted many NHFB members preferred to have landowner permission requirements to put up a tree stand as well. The Wildlife Federation was not in favor of requiring landowner permission so, in deference to them, the NHFB only sought to have tree stands labeled. The third bill requested by NHFB was to permit H2A agricultural workers to use their home driver licenses while working in NH. The problem arose because the State of NH mandates that all individuals residing in the state for 60 days must acquire a driver's license. The H2A guest worker program facilitates the employment of professional farmers from other countries on farms within the State. These individuals undergo vetting processes conducted by three federal agencies, including Homeland Security as well as the State. Farmers who hire these individuals cover the expenses for their transportation, housing, and insurance. H2A visas are specifically for temporary or seasonal employment. Initially, the Bill passed the Senate; however, the House raised concerns regarding details in the Bill. The House had retained the bill for further study. The Bill has been passed by both Houses without any concerns. However, Mr. Johnson pointed out that the Bill has not yet been signed by the Governor. He also mentioned that it affects approximately 350 guest workers in the state, and this number continues to grow. Discussion ensued. Vice Chair Porter mentioned his efforts to promote NHFB to new members in

the agriculture world, but they don't seem to recognize the necessity. He inquired about how the NHFB encourages these individuals to become members. Mr. Johnson acknowledged the challenge and noted that, typically, NHFB only hears from those individuals when there is an issue. He suggested, when promoting NHFB, to highlight the issues NHFB has resolved in the past year or so, as well as their current focus areas. Chair Keegan inquired about the specific demographic being targeted for membership. Mr. Johnson said there are no targeted demographics and explained that the majority of people are familiar with federal programs like Cooperative Extension and hold an expectation of receiving assistance without incurring any costs. Discussion ensued. Ms. Fournier asked if there have been any issues pertaining to microbreweries. Mr. Johnson said there hasn't been any concerns thus far. Vice Chair Porter asked about the Farm Bureau Foundation's purpose. Mr. Johnson explained that the foundation was established when their former President Wayne Mann retired. It was separate from NHFB. The Board of Directors set aside funds to establish the foundation for agricultural education. They asked NHFB to take over the foundation because they were having challenges recruiting volunteers. The Farm Bureau Board of Directors couldn't take it over, but their Executive Committee now acts as Directors of the Foundation. The funds are not active and they're still exploring how to repurpose the Foundation. Mr. Ralph Odell asked if NHFB would support the Agricultural Commission in attending policy meetings within the local and county levels. Mr. Johnson encouraged members of AgComm to attend. He had spoken with Mr. Bob Cunniff, the Chair of their Federation Policy Committee, and discussed the need to involve more people. Mr. Johnson said every August, their State Policy Development Committee meets and invites decision makers from all over the state to discuss their priorities and anticipated issues in the upcoming year. The annual meeting is the foundation for developing policies each year. Mr. Johnson mentioned that they aim to have at least one member from every county Farm Bureau present and those individuals must bring information back to their respective counties. The main difficulty they face is getting people to attend. The meeting begins in the middle of the day and concludes around 5 PM, a time when most individuals are unavailable. They are working to find a solution. Mr. Johnson suggested that Mr. Odell contact the county president about attending policy meetings. No further discussion.

*Composting Education Plans:* Deputy PCD Director O'Brien was responsible for creating composting signs for use at the Transfer Station; however, the sign machine is currently broken. She will update Chair Keegan on the progress tomorrow. Chair Keegan noted Commissioners will hold off on distributing composting materials at the Transfer Station. Their goal is to educate more residents on composting food waste. Last year they educated residents at the Community Garden as well as the Transfer Station and now they want to revisit it to increase participation. Deputy PCD Director O'Brien suggested using the Agricultural Commission banner to attract more attention and, hopefully, more participation in the composting program. Chair Keegan stated further progress on composting plans will be discussed at the next meeting.

*Welcome Wagon Update:* Vice Chair Porter gave an update on the Welcome Wagon. PCD Assistant Gallagher put together a draft mock-up that fits the Welcome bag format. It provides a description of Boscawen Agriculture and listed the AgComm members on the back. Vice Chair Porter spoke with Mr. Josh Marshall about obtaining a copy of the 'Who's Who in NH Agriculture Directory' but they have reduced the number of hard copies being printing. Mr. Marshall said he would check their supply and will follow up. Chair Porter suggested having Town Clerk Nicole Hoyt selectively give out a copy to individuals that are interested in receiving information about agriculture. PCD Assistant Gallagher proposed adding a list of websites to the 1-pager. Commission members will send her a list of websites to be included. Chair Keegan said they will give Town Clerk Hoyt a few copies of the directory to pass out to interested residents. PCD Assistant Gallagher asked Commissioners to review the draft mock-up and send her necessary corrections. Vice Chair Porter recommended the 1-pager be created with a heavier material, so it is more durable. He suggested a light green colored paper. Deputy PCD Director O'Brien and PCD Assistant Gallagher will look into the changes to finalize the draft. Deputy PCD Director

O'Brien noted the Parks and Recreation program starts June 26<sup>th</sup> and offered to distribute any AgComm outreach materials needed to the parents at Parks and Rec. At the beginning of tonight's meeting, Mr. Sanborn noted he was unable to donate cans of maple syrup for the Welcome Wagon bags. No further discussion.

Outreach to Local Farmers: Chair Keegan reached out to Tim Reese, the owner of New Hampshire Hereford Hogs Farm, on Corn Hill Road to learn more about his business and ask if he would like to make a presentation to the Commissioners. Chair Keegan gave background knowledge on Mr. Reese. He was originally from West Virginia and grew up on a farm. Among the crops they raised were pigs. He moved to NH for a work assignment. He decided to stay and found a home in Boscawen where he is raising NH Hereford pigs. Mr. Reese is one of the leading piglet suppliers in the country for New Hampshire Hereford Hogs. Chair Keegan explained Mr. Reese maintains detailed breeding process and medical records for his stock. Chair Keegan noted he currently has several breeding sows and piglets. Chair Keegan invited Mr. Reese to attend an AgComm meeting to talk about his farm operation. He accepted. Chair Keegan still needs to ask him if he would like to be listed on the Rack Cards. Deputy PCD Director O'Brien asked about Mr. Reese's marketing. Chair Keegan said he is slaughtering in Barnstead but is unclear about his marketing. Discussion ensued. Chair Keegan will touch base with Mr. Reese about attending and making a presentation at the August meeting as well as clarify his Rack Card listing.

#### **Other Business:**

Mr. Tillman mentioned that he is the sole volunteer responsible for organizing the concession stand at the Draft Horse Event on August 20th. His plan is to purchase pizzas and cookies from Market Basket and utilize the remaining soda from the Yard Sale. Chair Keegan suggested finding another volunteer to help.

Chair Keegan received a letter from Ms. Polly Dawson, Chair of the Old Home Day Committee, asking if the Ag Commission would be interested in participating in the OHD parade. Discussion ensued. Deputy PCD Director O'Brien recommended handing out AgComm material at the parade. Chair Keegan noted there are requirements such as having two people walk in the parade. The Commission decided not to participate in the OHD parade.

#### **New Business:**

Chair Keegan and Mr. Jeff Abbe checked the Roundabout sign and found that the top section is rotting. The Beautification Committee discussed possible solutions and Chair Keegan subsequently spoke with Vice-Chair Porter. Chair Keegan noted there is a sign on N. Water Street that had been kept in storage and is still in good shape. He proposed removing the top piece of the roundabout sign and replacing it with the top piece from N. Water Street. Ex-Officio Bevans offered to provide the wood to replace the N. Water Street top section. Vice Chair Porter will supply the paint and paint the new sign section. Vice Chair Porter suggested reaching out to Concord Makerspace for help on the repair. Deputy PCD Director O'Brien suggested contacting Liber Customs on Tremont Street to see if they would be able to help as well. Deputy PCD Director O'Brien will contact Makerspace for more information about their capacity to do the job.

Mr. Odell mentioned that there was previous discussion about visiting the Fresh Start Farm to learn more about their refugee work. Chair Keegan will reach out to Joe Pustizzi to schedule a date.

Deputy PCD Director O'Brien asked if any local farms have reached out about their crops being ruined from the frost. Chair Keegan said the only farm he has heard from is Apple Hill. Ex-Officio Bevans noted Richardson's farm lost about 75% this year.

**Action Items:**

- PCD Assistant Gallagher -Find out how many plots are available at the BCG from Mr. Jeff Abbe
- Deputy PCD Director O'Brien -Try to fix the Cricut to make the Composting Signs
- Commissioners-Send a list of websites to Kara to place on the Welcome Wagon sheet
- PCD Assistant Gallagher-Finalize draft of Welcome Wagon sheet for the July meeting
- Chair Keegan-Follow up with Mr. Tim Reese about attending the August meeting & if he wants to be added to the Rack Cards
- Deputy PCD Director O'Brien-Send Concord Makerspace contact information to Chair Keegan
- Chair Keegan-Reach out to Joe Pustizzi about visiting Fresh Start Farm

**Next Meeting and Public Hearing:**

- Tuesday, July 11<sup>th</sup>, 2023 @ 6:30 p.m.

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

*Respectfully submitted, Hannah Gardner*