



TOWN OF ACTON AGRICULTURAL COMMISSION

Meeting Minutes 28 Dec, 2021

6:00 PM

Virtual Meeting

Present: Morene Bodner, Patrick Hearn, Joe Hebert, Peggie Hebert, Heidi Porten, Paul Simeone

Natural Resources Assistant, Zoom host, and recording secretary: Bettina Abe

Attendees: Acton Conservation Trust President Susan Mitchell-Hardt, Joe Will, Jody Harris-Acton Conservation Trust, Felix Garcia -Acton Board of Health

Absent: Peggy and Joe Hebert

Regular Business:

Heidi convened the meeting at 6:01 PM

The virtual meeting advisory was read in its entirety

1. Citizen's Concerns

There were no citizen concerns raised

2. Approval of the 30 Nov meeting minutes:

Minutes were unanimously approved by roll call vote.

3. Expanded Protection for The Morrison Farm Property

Morene and Bettina reported there is very large support amongst town boards and committees as well as very active community garden group of more than 50 members and other citizens to preserve the Barn and House. Moreen noted that the high New England interest in historical heritage is an undervalued but important quality.

There are recent and ongoing examples of town antique properties that are being considered for restoration that will provide significant public space as well as historical preservation. For example, the Asa Parlin house on 17 Woodberry Lane proposal will provide a 70 person seating for cultural events, while preserving the flavor in the Acton Town Center. There is also strong citizen support for this project. However, hazardous material removal, ADA accessibility, Restrooms, Patios, etc and the need to pay prevailing wage sum up to very expensive restoration projects that stress the town budget and place burden on those who have to manage these budgets. Managing cost and historical preservation together appears to be a significant component in successful outcomes.

The best path forward appears to be thoroughly communicating our proposal that Morrison Farm House be a historical monument requiring only a weather tight shell and

without public entry so that much of the expense inherited in restoring and maintaining antique properties will be avoided and that restoring the barn would provide space for present town needs such as equipment storage for the Cemetery Department. The emerging proposal would also include the formation of a support group “Friends of Morrison Farm” and placing the entire Morrison Farm Property under an Agricultural Conservation Restriction without dividing the property as was originally contemplated.

Next steps are to hold a meeting with the Town Manager, Town Planning, Ag Comm and perhaps Town Counsel to agree on the best path forward. The Ag Comm position is that if the citizens want this and we can make an economically reasonable plan it should be proposed at town meeting. If a positive outcome is reached at the meeting above then a plan with quotes for the house and barn restoration would be drafted and circulated amongst town committees prior to writing a warrant article for the Town Meeting.

4. New Property in Consideration

There is property in closed discussion but not yet ready to discuss publicly.

5. Walking Trail Extension to Stonefield Farm

We discussed various pathways for a walking trail to connect the Assabet River Rail Trail to Stonefield Farm. An immediate issue in going forward is to clarify if trail making, or any other restrictions were placed on the \$15,000 grant from Field Pond Foundation to Boston Area Gleaners, then to discuss with Boston Area Gleaners and go forward with trail making accordingly.

6. Jan 25th 2022 Meeting Agenda

Virtual Meeting Advisory

1. Adrea Becerra- Acton Sustainability Director- Apr 22nd 2022 Earth Day Ag Comm Table
2. Citizen's Concerns
3. Approval of Dec 28th minutes
4. Extended Protection for Morrison Farm
5. New Property in Consideration
6. Next Steps Regarding Stonefield Farm Walking Trail
7. Comprehensive Agricultural Plan
8. Next Meeting Agenda

7. Comprehensive Ag Plan

We reviewed the original topics and areas of interest and found assignments to be agreeable to personal interests. Heidi will send out Google Docs and open a Google Folder for us to use in collaboratively assembling the plan.

The meeting was adjourned at 6:59 PM

Linked relevant documents and meeting materials can be found in the Agricultural Commission's page on the Town website or through the following link. <http://doc.acton-ma.gov/dsweb/View/Collection-12706>