



TOWN OF ACTON AGRICULTURAL COMMISSION

Meeting Minutes 25 Apr, 2022

6:00 PM

Virtual Meeting

Present: Morene Bodner, Patrick Hearn, Paul Simeone

Natural Resources Assistant, Zoom Host, and Recording Secretary: Bettina Abe

Attendees: Acton Conservation Trust President Susan Mitchell-Hardt

Absent: Joe Hebert, Peggy Hebert, Heidi Porten

Regular Business:

Morene convened the meeting at 6:02 PM

The virtual meeting advisory was read in its entirety

1. Citizen's Concerns

There were no citizen concerns reported.

2. Approval of the 22 Feb, 2022 meeting minutes:

Minutes were unanimously approved by roll call vote.

3. Expanded Protection for The Morrison Farm Property

Morene mentioned that we have been advised to delay the Morrison Farm protection and building preservation one year which leaves the property exposed. Activities to keep the momentum of the present plan include the following:

- Mid-year briefing for Select Board.
- Write APR
- Get quotes on Barn rebuild and house external tidying. Morene is presently working with a barn builder of high quality and we can two additional quotes for comparison.

4. New Property in Consideration

No new property in consideration

5. Comprehensive Ag Plan Progress

Some progress in reviewing existing materials but in general reported individual schedules has not allowed progress. There was general agreement that we would tackle this over the 2022-2023 Winter meetings.

6. Ag Comm Table at May 21st Garden Club Plant Sale

There was consensus that we should support a table at this event to promote public awareness regarding the AgComm. A poster of the Acton Farms Map and an updated collage showing the new Right-to Farm signs was agreed upon. Pat will make heavy easels so signs are not wind-blown. The final version that will be circulated to Ag Comm Members for approval before the 21st. Pat will set up and attend. Maureen will also attend for as long as possible at the opening.

7. Kristen Guichard (Acton Planning Board) presentation on large land parcel protection

Kristen explained how the 1991 Planned Conservation Residential Community (PCRC) Bylaw preserved open space as common land and how that process compared to Standard subdivisions. Central to PCRC is the concept that use of zoning and zoning concessions can be used to reduce land fragmentation without cost to the town. A PCRC effectively allows exemptions to certain lot size and lot boundary requirements in exchange for preservation of common land within a parcel or contiguous parcels. In Acton a PCRC requires a special permit, must be on a parcel of at least 8 acres, is allowed in all zoning districts, can have up to 80% of the houses that result from dividing the area of the parcel by the lot size in that zoning district, that the common open space be at least 60% of the entire parcel and that the open space ratio of upland to wetland be at least the same ratio as that of the entire parcel. The ownership of the open space can be the Town, a Non-profit or a Corporation/Trust held by the owners of the homes in that parcel. The use of the open space is typically defined and approved in the permitting process and can be Conservation, Agricultural, Horticultural, Forest, etc. The Planning Board is the ultimate authority in approving the open space use. Space planning evolves as the ongoing values and influence of the Acton Citizens, voted at town meetings, will influence the balance between preservation of open space and housing.

Pat asked if the “Transfer of Development Rights” concept could include transactions between separated parcels and across time span by purchasing development rights from owners who wished land to remain undivided land and banking these to sell later to developers who wished to receive development rights in areas that would like to have denser zoning, such as near village centers. Pat felt the advantage of banking development rights is to proactively protect large parcels without the risk of not having the reaction time when property is suddenly placed on the market.

Kristen explained that Acton does indeed have a Transfer of Development Rights Bylaw that has been used, although rarely, between widely separated parcels and the idea of establishing sending and receiving zoning for development rights as well as banking them across time has been discussed. She also mentioned the concept of establishing a bank is an important aspect and that finding zones for receiving development rights (increasing population density) is more difficult than finding sending zones for development rights (maintaining population density).

All agreed further discussion would be welcome and warranted and that tonight’s discussions were valuable and appreciated.

8. Sept 27th 2022 Meeting Agenda

Reading of Virtual Meeting Advisory

1. Citizen's Concerns
2. Approval of Apr 25th minutes
3. New Property in Consideration
4. Follow-up with Kristen Guichard (Planning Dept) regarding Transfer of Development Rights and other means to protect larger parcels from subdivision.
5. Comprehensive Agricultural Plan
6. Ag Comm Table at Acton Garden Club plant sale
7. Ag Comm Logo
8. Meeting Agenda for Oct 25th

The meeting was adjourned at approximately 7:10 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>