



## **TOWN OF ACTON AGRICULTURAL COMMISSION**

**Meeting Minutes 22 Nov, 2022**

**6:00 PM**

**Hybrid Meeting: Zoom and in person at Town Hall Room 9**

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

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

Attendees: Acton Conservation Trust President Susan Mitchell-Hardt, Acton Conservation Agent Mike Gendron

Absent: Paul Simeone

### **Regular Business:**

Heidi convened the meeting at 6:08 PM

**The virtual meeting advisory was read in its entirety**

#### **1. Citizen's Concerns**

There were no citizen concerns reported.

#### **2. Approval of the Oct 25th, 2022 meeting minutes:**

Heidi asked if the Oct 25th draft meeting minutes required any corrections or additions. None were given so the minutes will be posted as written. In the future we will not vote on the minutes if there are no corrections required. At this meeting we did vote and the minutes were approved unanimously by roll call vote.

#### **3. New Property in Consideration**

No new property discussed.

#### **4. Morrison Farm Protection**

Morene reported that Mike Black, an experienced barn renovator, Morene and her husband visited Morrison Farm to assess the viability and cost of repairing the barn for future town use. This information would be helpful in next steps towards proposing a CR or APR for this property. The barn is repairable. The repair items would include collar ties to prevent spreading and plywood corner stiffeners to maintain squareness. Ridgeline sag and wall ripples would not necessarily be straightened but the building could be structurally sound without having these corrected. The foundation was only partially visible and would need further investigation. Mike will ask for a structural engineer's inputs and will submit a written note on restoration of the barn. Grant money to restore the barn may be available. There was lengthy discussion on what action should be taken in the warrant article to create a CR/APR and whether the article should be to just create a CR/APR or also include full details on the Barn Restoration, Friends of Morrison Farm, House external preservation, etc. The end result was

that Pat would find out the 2023 Town meeting dates and the specifics on warrant article creation and submission and Morene and Heidi would work together to write a rough draft of what we want the warrant article to include. If Pat finds out that the deadline for submission is very near term we can call a special meeting specifically to work on an earlier submission. Susan mentioned the cost of the CR/APR alone is not that much but a fund for monitoring the CR/APR will need to be added. She will consider discussion with the Acton Conservation Trust board to see what financial support might be available for this.

#### **5. Ag Comm Logo and other Presentation Materials**

A large number of ideas were discussed regarding outreach activities and materials. The group felt that Joe/Peggy's brochure could be expanded to include text describing the main activities of the Ag Comm, a farm list and map, link to our website, etc. Pat will get in touch with Joe to further discuss ideas and help merge materials. In the 10 November public forum presenting material from the 2023-2030 OSRP survey, drinking water supply, walking trails, rivers / streams / ponds, forests, wildlife habitats, wetland and trees were all considered higher priority items for protection as natural and scenic resources than farms and farmland. Susan mentioned that OSRP is publicly visible and gets a lot of support from many young newcomers in Acton who may not be fully aware of the number of farms so farm outreach definitely would be beneficial. There was group discussion of increasing outreach through farmer organization, farm tours etc, while recognizing the need to properly coordinate this type of outreach with the farmers.

Pat agreed to add a border with text to Paul's Plow logo, review with Paul and get back to group.

#### **6. Comprehensive Ag Plan Progress**

Pat reported that he had started the draft Acton Comprehensive Ag Plan and would hopefully be able to send out the uncompleted draft before the Dec 27<sup>th</sup> meeting. The thinking is that this frame work would give us a working document that we could each contribute to according to individual expertise.

#### **7. OSRP Memo**

The Ag Comm members received a letter and invitation from Mellissa Settipani-Rufo, Acton Recreation Director, explaining the Acton 2023 OSRP working group has derived four main goals from the recent survey and public forum that will serve to guide the writing of the 2023 OSRP. The letter included a request that we review these goals and offer any feedback and suggestions we may have. It was also suggested we appoint a liaison to speak to these inputs and attend an upcoming meeting with the working group in January. Morene Bodner, who has extensive experience with previous OSRPs volunteered to be our liaison. Further discussion on OSRP issues included Pat's comment that more emphasis on the Town Long Term anticipated "fully mature" state would be helpful as a back drop for all planning. This would include the ultimate Acton fully developed Population, Housing distribution and Villages, Forests, Parks, Athletic Fields and Playgrounds, Walking and Bike Paths, Roadways, Public Transit, Retail, Farms and Farmlands, etc. Morene pointed out that an aspect of maintaining a

scenic and rural setting are not just forests, wetlands and stone walls but also active farms. She also stated that towns are continually changing so it is important to communicate well across all groups so historical view, experience and new thinking and can be optimally connected. Heidi requested all Ag Comm members bring their thoughts on this topic to the Dec 27<sup>th</sup> meeting so that we can discuss and prepare for the Jan OSRP

During this discussion it became obvious that some members were not getting their email. Bettina pointed out that everyone should check their mail at mail.actonma.gov or have town IT set up a forwarding address to your personal mail.

#### **8. Dec 27<sup>th</sup> Meeting Agenda**

Reading of Virtual Meeting Advisory

1. Citizen's Concerns
2. Approval of Nov 22<sup>nd</sup> minutes
3. New Property in Consideration
4. 2023 OSRP goals and discussion of feedback for January
5. Farmers Forum Discussion
6. Morrison Farm discussion
7. Ag Comm Logo, Brochure, and Ag Comm Event Posters
8. Comprehensive Agricultural Plan
9. Meeting Agenda for Jan 24<sup>th</sup> 2023

The meeting was adjourned at approximately 7:30 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>**