



TOWN OF ACTON AGRICULTURAL COMMISSION

Meeting Minutes Nov 28th, 2023

6:00 PM

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

Present: Morene Bodner, Patrick Hearn, Joe Hebert

Ian Bergemann Land Stewardship Coordinator

Attendees: Fran Arsenault Acton Select Board Liaison, Mike Gendron Acton Conservation Agent, Susan Mitchell-Hardt Acton Conservation Trust, Bettina Abe

Absent: Heidi Porten

Regular Business:

Morene convened the meeting at 6:03 PM

1. **Citizen's Concerns** None reported

2. **Approval of Oct 24th 24thth meeting minutes**

The minutes were approved unanimously by roll call vote

3. **Morrison Farm CR Update**

Morene reported that the recent site visit to Morrison Farm successfully provided the information Pete Westover required to complete the CR and delineate the exclusion zone. Mike commented that he had reviewed the 2022 selectboard meeting where the Rev 5 CR had been presented to insure we had captured all the feedback in our new approach. The consensus was that the prior concerns are now addressed. Susan will check with Pete to learn when the final revision of the CR will be ready. An official survey will need to be done if no survey can be found in the registry before submission to the State but this can wait until after the CR is approved at town meeting. Pat mentioned parking for users of the CR Zone has been addressed and reviewed with Planning but it would be a good idea to have a contingency plan for access to the CR zone to ensure that there are options that do not depend on the excluded zone for access. Pat stated his opinion that the question of alternate access may come up at a select board review.

4. **Comprehensive Ag Plan Update**

Pat reported that the property lists that were formerly appendix 1 and 2 are now merged into one table that has separate parts for Private, State owned and Town owned properties. Also multiple parcel adjacent properties of the same owner were grouped so that they are shown together and can be more simply shown and labeled on a map that is keyed to the table. The next step in finishing the plan is to update the text with the suggestions we have received from various reviewers.

5. **Non-resident Ag Comm Members**

The issue of having a limited number of ag comm members being non-residents, provided they are actively farming in Acton was discussed. Pat moved that we request the select board

change the Ag Comm charter to allow up to 20% of the Ag Comm membership be non-residents provided the non-residents are farming in Acton. Under no circumstances would any vote be composed of more than 20% non-residents. Joe seconded the motion. The motion was approved unanimously. Fran will make the request. If possible Fran will take the question to the next select board meeting on Dec 4th

Morene mentioned that John Chalmers may be interested in joining the Ag Comm. John has experience with crop and animal farming and is well acquainted with the State owned Ag properties along the Route 2 Acton entrance corridor. Bettina's offer to get in touch with John to encourage his application was endorsed. Pat stated that skills set balance within the team appropriate for the tasks ahead is an important consideration in the selection of new members.

6. Farmers Meeting

Morene has received numerous responses indicating the initial farmer's meeting will be well attended by a variety of farmers, OSC and ACT members and potential Ag Com candidates. Ian presented a wonderfully clear and concise Acton Ag Properties Summary Poster based on our property survey. The poster will be on display for the farmers meeting and copies of the Acton Ag Comm brochure will be available. Pat mentioned that we still need to work on better understanding of why SVT assigns some of the very low ratings that it occasionally does and how to incorporate this in our ranking. This will be downstream work that need not interfere with our present activity.

7. New Property in Consideration

Some properties in discussion but no present definite plans.

8. Dec 26th 2023 Meeting Agenda

Reading of Virtual Meeting Advisory

1. Citizen's Concerns
2. Approval of Nov 28th minutes
3. Morrison Farm CR update and next steps
4. Ag Plan Update
5. Request for 2 non Acton resident associate commissioners
6. Farmers Meeting
7. New Property in Consideration
8. Membership in Mass Association of Ag Comms
9. Meeting Agenda for Jan 23rd 2023

Morene called for a motion to adjourn. Pat made a motion to adjourn, Joe seconded and the motioned was approved unanimously at approximately 7:31 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>