



TOWN OF ACTON AGRICULTURAL COMMISSION

Meeting Minutes Jan 23rd, 2024

6:00 PM

Hybrid Meeting: Zoom and in person at Town Hall Room 126

Present: Morene Bodner, Patrick Hearn, Joe Hebert, Heidi Porten, Dylan Frazier

Ian Bergemann Land Stewardship Coordinator

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

Regular Business:

Heidi convened the meeting at 6:02 PM

1. **Citizen's Concerns** None reported
2. **Approval of Dec 26th meeting minutes**
The minutes were approved unanimously as written
3. **Morrison Farm CR Update** Morene reported she has written a Morrison Farm CR Executive Summary and the topic is on the Feb 5th Select Board Agenda. Morene also pointed out we need to ensure that the final copy is free of red-line edits. Susan questioned whether we had the Morrison Farm Water District correct. Mike checked the records to clarify it is Water District 3 and Morene will make sure the C/R has that stated. Susan also pointed out that Morrison Farm and Wetherbee Woods (Moritz property) have a similar farm use history and are environmentally connected via Nashoba Brook. This linkage and the close proximity make the properties a historical and environmental corridor which adds to their value and need to preservation priority. Morene, Pat and Fran discussed the value of having Bill Dickinson of the Historical Commission attend the Select Board meeting to offer support for the CR as part of their work to establish a National Registry entry and an Acton Historic District along Concord Road. Susan, Heidi, Bettina and others spoke to the possibility of a linked publicity effort for Morrison Farm and Wetherbee Woods prior to town meeting.
4. **Comprehensive Ag Plan Update** All received inputs have been incorporated. Remaining work is to update the Acton Farms Map, add citations and any adjustments required from recently published 2022 USDA Ag Census. These remaining items will be done by the February meeting. Susan pointed out that SVT has called a meeting for Feb 28th 2-4 at the Stow Community Center to discuss the rating and ranking system. Pat commented that, while the SVT Story Map is a huge step forward in Metro West land evaluation, it still needs some fine tuning to equitably rate some parcels. Pat stated he will attend the Feb 28th SVT discussion in Stow. Susan will send the SVT meeting notice to the Ag Comm members.

5. **Request for Non-resident Associate Ag Comm Members** Fran brought our request to the Select Board where it was approved. Our Charter had been modified to allow non residents members who are involved in Acton farming to be associate members. In the event Associate members are given voting status to achieve quorum the chair will ensure that no vote is taken unless the majority of voters are residents of Acton. Both Dylan and Usha will become official Ag Comm Associate members once they fill out the Volunteer Coordinating Committee (VCC) form that they will receive in an email.
6. **AG Comm Annual Report** Ian reported that he will write the 2023 annual report and send around for comments. The final version will be submitted before the 26th deadline.
7. **Acton Membership in Massachusetts Association of Ag Comms (MAAC)** Ian reported that the Mass Association of Ag Comms has updated their state Map of towns having Ag Comms and Right-to-Farm bylaws. Acton is now shown as having both. It's not presently clear how active this group is but they are responding to emails. Their literature states no membership fee and Ian will confirm. Heidi called for a motion, Pat moved we join MACC, Morene/Joe seconded, a roll call vote was unanimously in favor of joining.
8. **New Property in Consideration**
Susan reported that a CR is for Spring Hill Farm is underway. If approved, this would add to the protected Agricultural land of Acton.
9. **Ag Comm Participation in Habitat for All Working Group** Ian and Mike briefed the Ag Comm on a planning department led multi-commission/committee joint effort to explore zoning concepts that would be presented at the 2025 town meeting for approval. Areas of discussion might include changes to PCRC and Subdivision bylaws as well as Creating Land Opportunities for small farms. Pat and others felt Ag Comm attendance would be a good idea.
10. **Feb 27th 2024 Meeting Agenda**
Reading of Virtual Meeting Advisory
 1. Citizen's Concerns
 2. Approval of Jan 23rd 2024 minutes
 3. Morrison Farm CR update and next steps
 4. Comprehensive Ag Plan Update
 5. 2023 Annual Report
 6. Membership in Mass Association of Ag Comms
 7. New Property in Consideration
 8. Meeting Agenda for Feb 27th 2024

Heidi called for a motion to adjourn. Pat made a motion to adjourn, Morene, seconded and the motioned was approved unanimously at approximately 7:00 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>