



TOWN OF ACTON AGRICULTURAL COMMISSION

Meeting Minutes Feb 27th, 2024

6:00 PM

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

Present: Morene Bodner, Patrick Hearn, Heidi Porten

Ian Bergemann Land Stewardship Coordinator

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

Absent: Joe Hebert

Regular Business:

Heidi convened the meeting at 6:05 PM

1. Citizen's Concerns None reported

2. Approval of Jan 23rd meeting minutes

The minutes were approved unanimously with corrections requested by Morene and Susan.

3. Morrison Farm CR Update

Morene reported that she felt Morrison Farm meets the fundamental requirements for a property that needs to be conserved which are; Historical importance, Agricultural Activity, Desirable Natural Resource Attributes and Recreation. And that she, like the other Ag Comm members feel the proposal to place a CR on the property is well within the Ag Comms area of responsibility. Pat added that he agreed with Morene, and that he also felt that we are making progress and that while we have missed the window for this year but should continue the effort. Pat suggested the next step is to meet with David Martin to incorporate his requests for the CR that will gain his approval of taking this forward at the next possible town meeting. Mike offered a very insightful thought that the process may have gone much smoother if we had simply asked the SB to take a CR to town meeting and then work CR details with the SB after the approval at town meeting knowing that ultimately the SB has to sign off on the CR. Instead we had a prepared CR that somehow was interpreted as the SB signoff on the CR. Pat mentioned, given Mike's insight, both parties may have missed an opportunity to take the CR to the May town meeting but this can be viewed as a learning experience and that we should continue to move forward. Heidi expressed a similar interest in supporting a CR on this property and expressed several ideas for raising public support. Susan felt going with a citizen's petition was not the best path forward but there might be ways to pursue zoning changes or article 97. The remaining conversation between Fran, Heidi and Morene converged on going forward with a meeting between Ag Comm and Select Board. Ian and Heidi discussed creating a Save Morrison Farm logo/flyer that would serve as a symbol for the cause and a handout.

4. **Comprehensive Ag Plan Update** Pat reported all received inputs have been incorporated and the citations and references are now included. Goals and an approximate schedule are also included as requested by several reviewing bodies. Several of the sections in the Ag plan where complex topics such as ability to provide food security on Acton's available farmland or the amount of carbon sequestration that can be provided on Acton's cropland have been more fully explained placed in detailed end notes so as to preserve a more relaxing flow in reading the document. Ian and Pat will meet with Kristin Alexander and the GIS mapping team regarding updating Acton Farmlands map. Ian and Pat discussed a few minor adjustments that will be published in the next version. At the next meeting we need to agree on the final release, particularly the goals of future Ag Comm work, so please be sure to give the final draft a good read before the next meeting.
5. **AG Comm Annual Report** Ian reported that the 2023 Ag Comm annual report has been completed and reviewed for inclusion in the town report.
6. **Acton Membership in Massachusetts Association of Ag Comms (MAAC)** Ian reported that he has not yet heard from Mass Association of Ag Comms regarding our membership. He will continue to reach out to them and in the mean time we are shown as being a town with an Ag Comm and Right to Farm on the state map of Ag Comms.
7. **Protection of State Owned Properties along the Route 2 entrance of Acton.** Ian and Mike mentioned that in light of the announcement of this summer's closing of the Concord Prison there were concerns regarding the future of the State owned Dept of Correction lands on route 2 at the entrance to Acton, and that Andy Magee's recent letter to the select board pointed out the Massachusetts Legislature passed Chapter 313 of the Acts of 2008 that stated 112 of these acres in Acton and 136 acres in Concord owned by the Massachusetts dept of correction or the department of highways were placed in permanent protection for the purpose of open space protection, management and conservation, agriculture and forests, and limited public access for passive and specified active recreation and enjoyment.
8. **New Property in Consideration** – none mentioned
9. **New Ag Comm Members** Morene mentioned that John Chalmers may want to join Ag Comm. And Fran asked if Usha and Dylan had scheduled the VCC conversation. New member processing will be added to next month's agenda.

10. Mar 26th 2024 Meeting Agenda

Reading of Virtual Meeting Advisory

- a. Citizen's Concerns
- b. Approval of Feb 27th 2024 minutes
- c. Review of Comprehensive Ag Plan and Goal Agreement
- d. Morrison Farm CR Update and Next Steps
- e. Membership in Mass Association of Ag Comms
- f. New Ag Comm Member Processing
- g. New Property in Consideration
- h. Meeting Agenda for April 23rd 2024

Heidi called for a motion to adjourn. Pat made a motion to adjourn, Morene seconded and the motion was approved unanimously at approximately 7:03 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>