



TOWN OF ACTON AGRICULTURAL COMMISSION

Meeting Minutes April 23rd, 2024

6:00 PM

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

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

Ian Bergemann Land Stewardship Coordinator

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

Regular Business:

Heidi convened the meeting at 6:05 PM. The hybrid meeting announcement was read in its entirety.

1. **Citizen's Concerns** None
2. **Approval of March 26th meeting minutes** The minutes were approved unanimously by roll call vote after correcting the name of the farm to Stonefield in the CR monitoring section of the minutes.
3. **Comprehensive Ag Plan Update** The completed draft plan was reviewed in the March 26th meeting. In today's meeting the future goals and schedule were discussed. There was agreement that the guest speaker topics and general goals were sound and that the draft Ag Plan, as written but with a few remaining minor typo corrections, would be a good starting point. Although the present Ag Plan does include considerable outreach and public discussion Ian advised that Planning Dept staff would like the present Comprehensive Ag Plan to first receive public forum review before being fully incorporated into other town plans.

The 10 topics listed in the plan for a guest speaker outreach series were discussed along with possible speakers. Names mentioned included Brian Donahue noted local author and farm and food advocate, Jennifer Hashley Director of The New Entry Farm Program at Tufts University, Boston Area Gleaners and Gaining Ground on Food security and Equity, Jose Andres, Chef and Humanitarian of World Kitchen, Christa Collins on Land Protection, Local start up farm owner/operators like Barrett's Mill Farms who operate on town owned farmland in Concord. The idea of combining forces with neighboring towns in arranging speakers and speaking events was discussed and endorsed by all.

After discussion Heidi called for a motion on how to go forward with the plan. Pat moved that we approve the plan as a guiding document, while realizing all plans are subject to continual inputs from staff and community and will be updated as required. Morene seconded the motion which was then approved unanimously by roll call vote.

4. **Morrison Farm CR Update** The many facets of Morrison farm next steps were discussed. The agreed next step is for Fran Arsenault to convene a meeting between a few members of the select board and Ag Comm to plan the next steps. This will be done most likely over the summer but most definitely after the May 6th Town meeting. Joe Will commented that the Recreation Committee had no requirements for the property and that Disc Golf had been considered but the land was considered too small.
5. **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.
6. **New Membership** The question of bringing in John Chalmers as a committee member arose. John is believed to be very experienced and has applied but the status of his application is presently unknown. Bettina/Morene/Ian will contact John to ask if he is interested in joining the Ag Comm. Pat spoke briefly regarding the need to be certain new members have time and skills required for the task ahead. Pat, as a citizen, discussed his ideas of how volunteer committees could be improved with the VCC and reported they appeared to be pleased to have the inputs and will post the written copy of the suggestions as an attachment to their April 4th minutes. The suggestions are also posted in the Ag Comm records folder on DocuShare. A suggestion was made to advertise Ag Comm openings in Call for Volunteers section of the town website. Community Gardeners and Kate Despres of Daisy Hill Farm were also mentioned as possible candidates.
7. **CR Monitoring** Ian investigated CR monitoring requirements for Couette-Simeone and Boston Area Gleaners Stonefield Farm properties. The Ag Comm will be invited to attend the Fall inspection of Stonefield. ACT will also be invited. Stonefield has been asked to provide annual crop plans as part of the APR monitoring process.
8. **New Property in Consideration** – no new property discussed.
9. **Sep 24th 2024 Meeting Agenda**
Reading of Virtual Meeting Advisory
 1. Citizen's Concerns
 2. Approval of Apr 23rd 2024 minutes
 3. Comprehensive Ag Plan update, next steps in coordination with Planning Dept, and 2024-2025 goal setting
 4. Morrison Farm CR Update and Next Steps
 5. Membership in Mass Association of Ag Comms
 6. New Ag Comm Member Processing and Job Description for openings.
 7. CR Monitoring
 8. New Property in Consideration

Heidi called for a motion to adjourn. Pat made a motion to adjourn, Joe, seconded and the motion was approved unanimously at approximately 7:51 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>