



TOWN OF ACTON AGRICULTURAL COMMISSION

Meeting Minutes January 28, 2025

6:00 PM

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

Present: Heidi Porten, Kate Despres, Bettina Abe, Bill Alstrom

Ian Bergemann - Community Conservation Specialist

Attendees: Fran Arsenault - Acton Select Board Liaison

Regular Business:

Heidi convened the meeting at 6:00 PM. The hybrid meeting announcement was read in its entirety.

1. **Approval of the meeting minutes of April 23, 2024** – Bettina made a motion to approve the minutes, Bill seconded the motion. There was a unanimous vote to accept the minutes.
2. **Introduction of new Ag Com members** – Bettina Abe, Kate Depres and Bill Alstrom offered brief personal background information and their motivation for serving on Ag Com. Bettina was instrumental in helping to establish the Agricultural Commission in her role within the Natural Resources Department. She is a big fan of open spaces and their conservation. Kate operates a small farm in Acton that sells seedlings and she consults on gardening. Bill has farmed at Morrison Farm for 10 years and has also grown some of his own food in other locations for over 40 years. Central to the meeting was the education of the newest members (Kate and Bill) in the history of Ag Com and the mechanisms of conservation protection.
3. **Concerns from the Public** – None presented
4. **Commission elections** - Bettina nominated Bill to be clerk, Heidi seconded the motion. The vote was unanimous. Bettina nominated Kate to be Vice Chair and Heidi to be chair, Bill seconded the motions. The vote was unanimous.
5. **Comprehensive Agricultural Plan** – Ian provided a broad overview of the plan, indicating that it is still in draft form. He asked the commissioners to review the plan in detail before the next Ag Com meeting. The plan will be shared with appropriate town committees, refined and ultimately presented to the Select Board for their review and approval.
6. **Acton Agricultural Map** – Ian and Bettina explained the various categories of “farms” and their designation on the map. He will refine the map breaking out “61 from 61A” properties.
7. **Morrison Farm Update** – Ian and Bettina reviewed the process by which an attempt was made in 2024 to attain a conservation restriction for MF. The Select Board was not prepared to recommend a CR. A major concern was the disposition of the buildings on the property. We

agreed as a group that the commission should measure public support for the project. Ian will bring his ideas for a robust public outreach plan to the February 25 meeting.

8. **Massachusetts Association of Agricultural Commissions** – Ian has attempted to connect with them - no response. Ian will continue to do so. It may be that the association has paused activity.
9. **CR Monitoring** – Ian explained the nature of annual property walks. The single property to be viewed is the Stonefield Farm.
10. **New Property in Consideration** – None at this time. But one of the new commission's goals may be to research and identify potential farms to include in available programs.
11. **2024-2031 Open Space and Recreation Plan** – Ian will provide the Ag Com with an overview presentation in a future meeting – perhaps in April.
12. **Annual Commission/Committee Reports** – This is due on February 28. Ian will review a draft of the report with the Ag Com at the February 25 meeting.
13. **Ian commented that his appearance at the Farmers Market** (promoting the Ag Com and soliciting membership) was greeted with much enthusiasm by vendors and customers alike.
14. **Agenda items for February 25 meeting -**
 - Public input
 - Comprehensive Agricultural Commission Plan - discussion
 - Morrison Farm protection - community outreach
 - New property consideration
 - Annual Commission report – Ian's draft

Kate made a motion to close the meeting at 7:28 PM. Bill seconded the motion. The vote was unanimous.

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>