



TOWN OF ACTON AGRICULTURAL COMMISSION

Meeting Minutes October 22, 2025

6:00 PM

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

Present: Heidi Porten (chair), Kate Despres (co-chair), Bill Alstrom (clerk), Bettina Abe

Ian Bergemann - Community Conservation Specialist

Attendees: Fran Arsenault - Acton Select Board Liaison

Acton Residents virtually: Travis Odom and Eugenio Fernandez Ventosa

Regular Business:

Heidi convened the meeting at 6:04 PM.

The hybrid meeting announcement was read in its entirety.

1. **Approval of the meeting minutes of April 23, 2024** – Kate made a motion to approve the minutes, Bill seconded. The minutes were unanimously accepted.
2. **Concerns from the Public** - Travis and Eugenio reside on Main Street. Both hope to begin raising chickens soon. They both expressed concern that the chicken keeping by-law proposed by another resident would be too restrictive. Ian explained that the Ag Com was not proposing a chicken keeping by-law or endorsing any version of one. The Agricultural Commission would be consulted by other town committees (such as the Board of Health or Planning) if such a by-law were to develop. Ag Com does not currently have a chicken by-law as an open agenda item.
3. **Update on MAAC** – The Mass Association of Ag Coms is not functional now. However, there is the possibility of a “resuscitation”. Acton Ag Com is now on their list and will be contacted in that event.
4. **Comprehensive Agricultural Plan Discussion** – Bill submitted an edit of the plan creating more paragraph breaks to enhance readability. He also collected the annotations for an end of the document reference page. Ian will distribute the revised plan for members to review. The Commission will vote at the next meeting whether to accept the plan as written. Once approved, Ian will add more photos and graphics before the Ag Com Plan is submitted to the Select Board for approval.

In the future, Ag Com may develop a more compact version of the Comprehensive Agricultural Plan. The goal is a simpler document which could be used to educate. Ian envisions a section on the town website with helpful photos that would serve a similar purpose – explaining the Right to Farm law and the role of Ag Com.

5. Outreach

A. The Farmers Market appearances by Ag Com were deemed a success. Good exposure, good conversations with the public. It was recommended that Ag Com repeat this in June and August of 2026 – more active months, better foot traffic.

B. Ian suggested an “Annual Farmers Meeting” at Town Hall. Anyone with an interest in farming would be invited. This would be a “social event” and another opportunity to showcase the work of Ag Com and its efforts at preserving land in Acton for farming.

Tentative date January 29 at 7:00 pm.

6. Morrison Farm Update – Ag Com members continue to keep the protection of Morrison Farm as an open agenda item. Next steps will involve community outreach. Ian suggested holding a “Harvest Festival” at Morrison Farm. Ag Com is to meet in August to finalize plans. This could be an extensive event to include contests, food and information.

The tentative date is September 13th (9 am to 1:00 pm).

Ian provided an update on the community gardens. The three locations are now all to be farmed organically. Fencing repairs are anticipated. Extra-large plots at the North Acton garden may be subdivided. Throughout the season there was a waiting list of 8 to 10 applicants for garden plots.

7. New Property in Consideration – No new properties were considered.

8. Next Meeting Agenda (November 25):

Review and accept meeting minutes of October 22, 2025

Concerns from the Public

Comprehensive Agricultural Commission Plan- vote to approve

Farmers Meeting - January 29

Morrison Farm Update

Harvest Festival - September 13

New Property Consideration

Next Meeting Agenda

Bill motioned to close the meeting at 7:15 PM. Kate seconded. 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>