



TOWN OF ACTON AGRICULTURAL COMMISSION

Meeting Minutes Oct 15, 2020

6:00 PM

Virtual Meeting

Present: Morene Bodner, Patrick Hearn, Paul Simeone

Natural Resources Assistant, Zoom host, and recording secretary: Bettina Abe

Attendees: Acton Conservation Trust President Susan Mitchell-Hardt, Peggy and Joe Hebert

Absent: Heidi Porten

Regular Business:

1. Morene Bodner volunteered to chair in Heidi's absence and convened the meeting at 6:01 PM
2. The virtual meeting information advisory was read in its entirety
3. Sept 15 meeting minutes were approved unanimously by roll call vote
4. No citizen concerns were raised
5. **Attendance at Open Space Committee Meeting-** Pat reported that he had attended the Oct 2nd meeting of the OpenSpace Committee to introduce the Ag Com and to express our desire to work closely with OSC in writing our Agricultural Plan. The OSC indicated that formation of an Acton Ag Comm was a very welcome and timely event and that the OSC was a very logical connecting point for the Ag Comm.
6. **Introductions-** Peggy and Joe Hebert and the committee members mutually introduced themselves. The Heberts are a multigenerational Acton farm family who may have interest in joining the Ag Comm. Bettina explained the application process for town committees.
7. **Morrison Farm Protection Letter** - Morene discussed the letter to the Select Board addressing the AG Comm's strong preference to not have the dog park at the Morrison Farm property. Pat requested that we add emphasis to protect the Morrison Property specifically as farm land and Paul suggested that we explore future means to protect the Morrison Farm property specifically for agricultural use. Bettina and Morene noted that the Morrison Farm is presently held as general municipal property with no agricultural protection. Morene agreed to further emphasize the Morrison property farm value in the letter and agreed that exploring agricultural protection for this property would be a good future topic. Morene called for a motion to send the amended letter to the Select Board from the Ag Comm. The motion was moved by Pat, seconded by Paul and voted unanimously by roll call vote.
8. **Farm Signage-** Bettina mentioned that Right to Farm Signs would go to the Select Board for approval and recommended that we design our proposed sign or signs and proposed locations and then get on the SB agenda for a discussion. Google images has numerous examples of Right to Farm signs. Examples from Rochester NY, Aurora NY, Cambria and Westport were shown. She also described several example signs around town that we might want to see as reference. These include signs at intersection of 27 and High Street and at 50 Audubon drive. Morene commented that local signs for rivers and brooks are very attractive. Bettina provided an

organizational overview of the Acton Land Use Department with Matthew Selby as Land Use and Economic Development Department Director and the supporting departments of Natural Resources (Tom Tidman), Building Dept (Frank Ramsbottom), Health (Sheryl Ball) and Planning (Kristen Guichard).

9. **New Properties in Consideration** - Susan reported land parcels in consideration include farmland and abutting land and that the Ag Comm would be informed when appropriate. Susan also mentioned the Nashoba Valley Farm on Esterbrook Rd, formerly the Esterbrook Road Farm/ Pirouette Farm, is newly magnificent.

10. **Acton Ag Plan -**

- Bettina mentioned she may get town agricultural planning inputs from Pete Westover who is a state wide advisor to Ag Comms and helpful in our Ag Comm formation. Reviewing the Ag Plans of abutting towns was also suggested. The committee agreed that having a map of the town parcels showing the properties Susan Mitchell-Hart has listed as well as lands listed as chapter 61 by the town assessor would be helpful in our planning process.
- Bettina mentioned that Kristin Alexander and Aaron Green are valuable town resources in making GIS parcel-based maps and that she would introduce us to them. Pat was very pleased to be assigned the roll of coordinating the Ag Comm mapping requests with Kristin and Aaron.
- Morene questioned the Town or State level of approval required for an Ag Plan
- The question of future attendance of the Ag Comm at the OSC meeting was discussed. The group decided that initially we should attend on an as required basis and review Ag Plan progress with OSC as it develops.

11. **Agenda Items for Nov 10th Ag Comm Meeting-**

- Approval of minutes
- Citizen's concerns
- OSC meeting report as required
- New properties in consideration
- Expanded protection of the Morrison Farm property
- Farm Signage
- Ag Plan Discussion and progress on mapping parcels

12. **The meeting was adjourned at 7:02 PM**