

2015-01-13 Agriculture Commission Meeting Minutes

January 13, 2015

The meeting was called to order at 6:39 PM

Commissioners Present: K. Dennis, R. Cousens, B. Molodich, K. Morneau (FFA), V. Cole (alt), R. Gray (ex officio)

Commissioners Absent: A. Meek, Chair (H. Hopps alt), Amy Kemp, Vice Chair (Megan Johnson, alt)

Audience of Citizens: K. Hermanot, B. Hopps

Approval of Minutes: December 2014 minutes were unanimously approved.

Unfinished/Continuing Business

a. Treasurer's Report (B. Molodich): Checking account still pending.

b. CT Farmland Trust Application (A. Meek, absent): Tabled until after results from 2015 Farm Survey.

d. 2015 Farm Survey:

Possible new questions for survey discussed, including explaining the purpose of the survey, a brief Did You Know sheet regarding the availability of land clearing grants and our ability to help inform them, querying landowners regarding leasing land to others and gaining tax benefit thereof, do those surveyed support/buy Sterling grown, would they be interested in a Farmer's Market, how important farming/agriculture is to them in terms of the town's identity and as a community, inclusion of questions about hobby farming, revenue income, number of employees. Discussion of possible online survey via SurveyMonkey and whether Joyce would be able to provide necessary emails; also discussed possibility of farm survey and more general survey regarding attitudes about farming. Discussion of whether SurveyMonkey link could be made available on town website but also flyers in Town Hall to inform people of its presence.

New Business:

a. Other Boards and Commissions attendance. Per our January meeting with Lebanon Planner Phil Chester, it was agreed that the Agriculture Commission needs to begin sending representatives to other relevant commissions, particularly P&Z and the Board of Selectman meetings. Discussion of possibility of attending Board of Finance was also raised, but it was agreed to focus on P&Z and the Board of Selectmen for the time being. M. Johnson and R. Cousens agreed to attend P&Z together and that Commissioners would take turns attending other Board meetings based on a tag system.

b. Discussion of problems regularly attaining a quorum and need to bring in new members. It was observed that A. Kemp's contributions always knowledgeable and appreciated but that she frequently missed more than the four meetings in a row regularly since the Commission's inception and particularly since she became Vice Chair. The Commission was unanimous in promoting M. Johnson from alternate to Commissioner and Vice Chair and in adding K. Hermonot to take her place as alternate. The Commission thanks A. Kemp for her service and respectfully excuses her from the Commission but hopes she will continue to attend monthly meetings. A letter will be sent to the Selectmen regarding these appointments.

New Business:

January Next Steps: Questions for survey, goals for commission. Review Lebanon website for survey results.

Any Other Business:

Adjournment: R. Cousens made a motion, seconded by H. Hopps to adjourn at 7:49.

Unanimously approved.