

AGRICULTURAL COMMISSION MEETING
September 20, 2022

Attendance:

Members Present: Jim Dunn, Chris Hugo, Nancy Rocheleau, Maleah Gustafson, Ryan McKay

Members Absent: Tom O'Shea, Wendy Somerset

Others Present: None

Call to order: 7:40 PM

Minutes:

No minutes were available for review/acceptance.

Parcel Scoring Update:

In August, Jim provided information to DPW to update the Chapter 61 GIS overlay with the changes since the overlay was first created. There were only three changes required---two deletions and one change of color. Last week, Jim asked DPW for an update on progress on making the requested changes to the Chapter 61 overlay as well as progress on the creation of a new overlay to depict parcels which have Conservation Restrictions assigned which had been requested in January. No response was received from DPW on either topic.

Educational Series

No inputs from Town farmers were received over the summer.

Ag Comm Outreach

Participation is increasing, albeit slowly. It was suggested that this monitoring of Facebook's numbers has not proved very useful and should not be pursued further.

Forest Management Plan Update

No update available.

Open Space and Recreation Plan

Over the summer, the Draft Open Space Plan was sent back to the Town with a second round of requests for changes. These have been made (without input from the Committee) and the plan resubmitted to the State.

New Business

Puffer-Heinniger Chapter 61 Conversion

Jim reported on the Chapter 61 Conversion review process conducted during the Ag Comm's summer hiatus. This conversion and review was unusual in that the Town had been involved in the sale/conversion negotiations for over two years and had effectively decided not to exercise their first-right-of refusal option before the review began. The important abutters were also intimately involved in the sale negotiations all along. That left only the state agencies and eligible non-profits to be queried on their interest in the converted parcels (which were priced very high). No interest was shown by any

agencies eligible to be assigned the Town's FROR. Jim made a presentation to this effect to the Board of Selectmen on July 25, with the recommendation that the Town not (further) exercise their FOR on the involved parcels. The recommendation was accepted. The sale of parcels was completed prior to this meeting and the Town now owns about 100 acres of forest land that will not be developed. White Oak holds a conservation restriction on the property. \$250,000 of the Open Space Preservation Fund was used as part of the complex purchase of the property.

Farmer's Market

Jim reported that sales at the Farmer's Market have generally been slow this summer. Discussions concluded that the Market needs more/better and more continuous publicity. A more active Facebook page is the best candidate, with a hired Marketing Consultant the best option to make this happen. Funding would come vendor membership fees. These ideas will be passed on to the Market Manager.

Central MA Grown

Maleah said the brochure has had problems getting printed.

Election Schedule

Election of new officers will be held at the November meeting. Volunteers for all positions were requested.

Next Meeting

The next meeting will move to Tuesday, October 25 to accommodate a schedule conflict. The meeting will be in person.

Adjournment

Ryan McKay motioned to adjourn, Chris seconded, and all approved at 8:50PM

Respectfully submitted:

James Dunn
Acting Secretary