

AGRICULTURAL COMMISSION MEETING
MINUTES
September 17, 2020

Attendance:

Jim Dunn, Tom O'Shea, Maleah Gustafson, Nancy Rocheleau (new member candidate)

The meeting was called to order at 7:13 p.m.

MINUTES:

Committee asked the Secretary to make an amendment to the July minutes per Maleah and send back for review.

SUBCOMMITTEE:

Jim discussed the process of Chapter 61 parcel ranking for Nancy Rocheleau's (new member candidate) understanding.

EDUCATIONAL SERIES PRESENTATION:

No progress on this. WCCD will focus an upcoming workshop on composting.

NEW MEMBER RECRUITMENT:

Nancy and the Committee made introductions to each other. Nancy attended as a new member candidate. Jim informed the committee that he had reached out to two previous candidates and was able to speak with one and had no response from the other. Jim said that he would ask for the recommendation of the committee to forward Nancy's name to the Town Manager and then to the Select Board to become appointed as an official member of the committee.

AG COMM WEBPAGE / BLOG STATUS:

Maleah reported that there were 252 likes of the AgComm Facebook page with a 26% increase in post reach and engagement over the last month. The committee discussed tracking these metrics once per month.

AG COMM VIDEO UPDATE:

Chris was not in attendance to provide an update.

NEW BUSINESS:

The AgComm discussed implementation of the Master Plan. Jim mentioned that there is no Master Plan implementation committee and that the AgComm can choose priorities among the listed tasks and actions listed in the implementation part of the Master Plan. Jim grouped candidate priority tasks into three categories: 1. useful, but challenging; 2. definable, discrete tasks with concrete deliverables, and 3. in-progress or already accomplished. Tasks discussed with next steps include:

Page 51, Task 4.3.1.2 – Transfer of Development Rights

Page 77 – Task 5.1.1.5 – Update 2006 Forest Stewardship Plan. Tom to lead.

Page 77 – Task 5.1.1.7 – Jim and Tom create land protection strategy with local land trusts

Page 78 – Task 5.1.3.3 – Select what is relevant to Holden and then publish in some way through social media, making a distinction between agricultural vs. homeowner application of pesticides.

Page 79 – Task 5.3.3.1 – Tom can tie this task with 5.1.1.7

Page 98 – Task 6.2.3.1 and 6.3.2.1 – Scenic Roads Bylaw. Committee can copy bulk of this from similar models and adapt for the Town of Holden. Preserving places of cultural value could be a focus on farms for the AgComm, but this is less actionable in terms of concrete deliverables.

Page 154 – Task 8.6.2.1 – Social media efforts fits with ongoing activities and Central Mass Grown efforts including 8.6.2.4 where tools are out there to help keep ag land in ag use and a structured platform to help with underutilized farm land, similar to Land For Good program. Maleah would take on this task.

FARMERS MARKET:

Manager reported to Jim that the market is doing well. Some new vendors and some lost due to COVID restrictions. Attendance has been stable or on the increase.

CENTRAL MASS GROWN:

Annual meeting in late September / early October. Scheduled discussion on how farms are adapting to COVID restrictions and situation. What do they need further to adapt. Maleah reported that Congressman McGovern participated in a farm tour with staffers and Central MA Grown Board members. Some Holden farms were visited. Talked about buy local to encourage and awareness of farms in area.

The website was updated to be more searchable and provide a platform for businesses if they want or need such a platform, including facilitating wholesaler connections and producer awareness in general.

Nancy asked about the AgComm's role in community gardens. It was discussed that community gardens had their start with the AgComm, but now rested with a community garden committee.

Meeting was adjourned without a motion at time approximately around 8pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Tom O'Shea
Secretary