

AGRICULTURAL COMMISSION MEETING

MINUTES

January 19, 2021

Attendance:

Jim Dunn, Tom O'Shea, Chris Hugo, Maleah Gustafson (left @ 7:27pm), Nancy Rocheleau,
The meeting was called to order at 7:02 p.m.

MINUTES:

November minutes were voted on and approved. Chris Hugo motioned to accept December 2020 minutes with suggested changes, Nancy seconded, and minutes were voted to approve and accept with changes.

CHAPTER 61:

Jim informed the Commission that no response has been yet received on presenting to the Select Board. Tom recommended that Jim ask the Town Manager again to schedule Jim's presentation of the Chapter 61 rankings on the Select Board meeting agenda and schedule. Tom mentioned that the preparation and ranking of all (95) Chapter 61 parcels was a significant effort and would be good to close with a presentation to the Select Board for next steps.

EDUCATIONAL SERIES PRESENTATION:

Jim talked to Christine Higginbottom who is very knowledgeable about vegetable production, especially as a potential presenter as a garden researcher, historian, and consultant. Christine has presented to NOFA and recently to an audience of up to 175 people. Christine requested screen sharing and for the Town of Holden to host virtually. Topics that Christine could present on that would be of interest include heirloom vegetables, saving your own seeds, and asparagus culture. Jim suggested that the topic of science and art of tomato culture would have broad appeal to audiences especially for an early spring presentation.

Various days of the week and times of day were discussed to hold the educational presentation. Wednesdays and Sundays were considered as times when people may have more availability to attend. March 10th (evening) and March 21st (2pm) were suggested to ask Christine for her availability. Christine asked for a fee of \$100-\$150. Maleah asked about cost sharing the sponsorship and to reach a broader audience. Jim will invite Holden Garden Club and Rutland Ag Comm.

For publicity, a flyer will be developed by Nancy. Jim forwarded previously used flyers to Nancy. The flyer can be posted on Holden Ag Comm webpage and Facebook page and link to Town webpage. Maleah can draft press release. Maleah asked for Christine's bio and details of talks. Nancy mentioned sending out to garden clubs and the Tower Hill Botanical Garden.

Jim suggested the seeds saving topic for a fall workshop.

NEW MEMBER RECRUITMENT:

Jim mentioned that he has not heard back from his outreach to interested candidates. The Ag Comm is still have one vacancy.

AG COMM WEBPAGE / BLOG STATUS:

Maleah reported the following Facebook Stats (via email to Chair Jim Dunn post meeting)

- 261 Likes.
- 70.3% women/29.7% men
- Top Cities: Holden 57.1%; Worcester 10.3%; Rutland 3.1%; Princeton 1.9%.
- Reach (Dec 22, 2020 to date) of 30, increased by 150% over previous 30 days.

AG COMM VIDEO UPDATE:

Chris stated that there is no update. COVID restrictions and social distancing creating a barrier to interviews. Chris mentioned that an interesting perspective to include in the video could be the Chapter 61 and right-to-farm laws and how it affects farmers. Jim said there is a State law with waivers for normal agricultural activities that cause odors, noise, pesticide application, and travelling public roads with farm equipment.

NEW BUSINESS:

Jim is now representing the AgComm on the Open Space and Recreation Plan Committee. Jim mentioned that the OSRP has had two meetings (December 7, 2020 and January 17, 2021) with around 15 – 20+ people. CMRPC is the consultant hired for the Open Space and Recreation plan updates. The Town is updating the plan to ensure a valid, current plan that will allow the Town to be eligible for state grant programs. Glenda Williamson, conservation agent, is the lead coordinator for the Town. Jim Dunn can send links to the meetings.

Glenda Williamson is leading the Committee's work. Jim has many documents to review in prep for a meeting over the next month. Jim can send a link for the meeting posting. Jim asked if Tom had heard from Glenda Williamson about moving forward with updating the Forest Stewardship Plan. Tom replied that he had not heard from Glenda.

The OSRP will be sending out a public survey to be completed by February 28th, 2021. The plan's targeted completion date is July 15th with a draft to be sent to the Commonwealth of Massachusetts for review on June 15th. The goals and objectives will roll into the plan and there will be two interns writing the plan.

Tom O'Shea will reach out to Glenda Williamson to begin also updating the Town's Forest Stewardship Plan.

FARMERS MARKET:

The market will open on the 1st Tuesday of May. Jim will reach out to the Light Department in March to get the banner up for the last week of April. The banner is removed after the last week of October when it closes.

CENTRAL MASS GROWN:

Maleah reported that CMG is now accepting memberships for 2021. Memberships due by FEBRUARY 14!

MEMBERSHIP

For Central Massachusetts Farms and Food Businesses who source from local farms.
For non-farms, individuals, businesses and organizations who want to support and strengthen our local food system here in Central Massachusetts.

MEMBERSHIP BENEFITS

- Inclusion in the network of farms, consumers and buyers who uphold Central Mass Agriculture
- Permission to use the Central Mass Grown logo, price cards, stickers and signage
- Listing in CMG's online Farm & Food Guide
- Listing in CMG's annual print Local Farm & Food Guide*
- Listing in CMG's annual Member Map*
- Members-only networking events + newsletters
- Free or discounted participation to educational workshops and business development programs
- 1:1 Technical Training
- Participation in publicity events
- Linked logo on CMG Website
- Logo in CMG's Annual Local Farm & Food Guide*
- *Must enroll/renew by February 14, 2021

OTHER BUSINESS:

None.

Motion made by Chris and seconded by Nancy to adjourn the meeting. Meeting was adjourned at 7:51pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Tom O'Shea
Secretary