

AGRICULTURAL COMMISSION MEETING

MINUTES

August 20, 2019

Attendance: Steve D'Aquila, Jim Dunn, Chris Hugo, Tom O'Shea, Ryan McKay
Eileen Charbonneau (arrived at 7:38 p.m.); Maleah Gustafson
(arrived 7:40 p.m.)

The meeting was called to order at 7:35 p.m.

SUBCOMMITTEE:

The subcommittee finished rating the 61A properties. They will look at four outliers again in September. The subcommittee presented graphs indicating the ratings they have made on each property.

MINUTES:

The Minutes of the July 9, 2019 meeting were unanimously accepted (Maleah, Ryan, and Tom abstained from voting as they were absent from the July meeting)

EDUCATIONAL SERIES PRESENTATION:

Steve has been in contact with Heidi Cooper, the presenter for the upcoming presentation, "Food Preservation and Safety" at the Holden Senior Center on Wednesday, August 28, 2019. She is prepared to present. She requested the use of an overhead projector. Chris will make sure it is available for the presentation. Chris will also pick up the key to the Holden Senior Center and open and close the Center before and after the presentation.

Promotion for this presentation is ongoing. Flyers have been posted at several locations in town as well as on the Red Barn and Holden Garden Club calendars. Maleah will post it on our Facebook page, send it to the Town's Facebook page, and send the information to the Landmark. Jim stated that he has been in contact with Abby and Wendy who have promised it will be advertised on the Town sign. It was noted that with Holden Days occurring shortly before the date of the presentation, having flyers posted and available as handouts at that event would greatly increase promotion. Chris will be at Holden Days by 9:00 a.m. to help set up for the Holden Garden Club. He will post flyers at that table and request to post at the Board of Selectman's table and any other tables that seem appropriate. Eileen gave Chris 20-25 flyers for this purpose. Jim will ask Wendy if the Town would be willing to make more color flyers for use at Holden Days. Eileen will contact a member of the Community Garden Committee to ask if they will have a table at Holden Days and, if so, would they permit posting and handouts of the flyer on their table. Steve encouraged all commission members to post to our own social media sites

FARMERS MARKET:

Ryan reported that business at the Holden Farmer's Market seems to be going well. There have been no problems of which anyone is aware.

Eileen noted that a few weeks ago, Market Manager Leslie Kelley and vendor Rickey Evangelista asked her to contact Maleah about going forward with setting up a Facebook page for the Market. Eileen texted Maleah, who responded. Eileen forwarded Maleah's text to Rickey who shared it with Leslie. Maleah explained that she has done what she can for them, but since she is not a Holden Farmer's Market Facebook page administrator, she cannot add more content for them. If Leslie is interested in appointing a co-manager with social media experience, Maleah will be happy to assist that person in getting started.

Steve asked what other Farmer's Markets do to draw crowds beyond the food and wares their vendors sell. Ryan stated that many others offer music, canning and other related demonstrations. They also have weekly newsletters listing upcoming activities as well as what's in season.

Jim reported that the Farmer's Market banner flew once, but was torn by the wind. Connor Graphics in West Boylston, the company that created the banner, either could not or would not repair it. A member of the Light Department told him that they've had problems with the banners made by that company. Ryan has also had a problem with their banners. LaPrade Advertising in Holden was suggested as an alternative. Ryan made a motion that Jim follow up by contacting the owner, Jack LaPrade. Maleah seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

ELECTION OF NEW CHAIR:

Holden Agricultural Commission Chair, Steve D'Aquila, announced at a previous meeting that he would soon no longer be a resident of Holden and, therefore, would have to step down from the Agricultural Commission. At tonight's meeting, Ryan made a motion to nominate Jim as the new Chair. The motion was seconded by Chris. The motion passed unanimously. James Dunn accepted the nomination and will become the new Chair of the Holden Agricultural Commission effective as of the September 2019 meeting. Jim, currently the Vice-Chair, said the commission could wait until the September meeting to nominate and vote on the positions of Vice-Chair and Secretary.

Steve noted that he has very much enjoyed his time on the Agricultural Commission. He will pass on any relevant information for the commission. The rest of the commission members expressed our appreciation for Steve's leadership.

Steve's leaving the commission creates a vacant position. Eileen noted that Kent Rissmiller may be interested in joining the commission. Kent has a Master's Degree in Environmental Law and is a Dean at WPI. He is interested in becoming involved in serving the Town of Holden and feels this might be a good fit. Kent is also the husband of Rachel Ross, owner of Hillside Herbals in Holden, and, thus has experience in herb farming. Eileen has passed the information along to Kent regarding submitting the "Do Something" form on the Town's website. As of this date, it is unknown if he has done so yet.

CENTRAL MASS GROWN:

Maleah reported that Central Mass Grown is sponsoring "A Night at the Orchard" at Tougas Farm on Sunday, September 8, 2019 from 5:00 – 8:00 p.m. which will include food, drinks, and music. Tickets are on sale through August 30, 2019 through the CMG website. A list of CMG events will be coming soon.

On a motion made by Ryan, seconded by Jim, the meeting was adjourned at 8:19 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Eileen Charbonneau
Secretary