

**Town of Boscawen  
Agricultural Commission  
Meeting Minutes  
March 12, 2015**

**Commissioners Present:** John Keegan, Elaine Clow, Angela Swyers, William Bevans, Tina Larochelle

**Alternate Commissioners Present:** Tom Danko, John Porter

**Commissioners Absent:** None

**Commissioners Ex-Officio Absent:** Roger Sanborn

**Alternate Commissioners Absent:** Ken Marshall

**Others present:** Bruce Crawford, Chair, Planning Board

Chair J. Keegan called the meeting to order at 7:00pm. The Commission appointed alternate J. Porter to voting status. J. Keegan directed members to the Commission's 3/12/2015 meeting materials packet.

**Review and Acceptance of the prior meeting's minutes** J. Keegan directed members to the Agricultural Commission's meeting minutes of **02/012/2015**. After some discussion, all members agreed to make a few minor grammatical amendments. In addition, Chair Keegan stated he will request that staff include the Agricultural Commission's draft minutes with the meeting packet going forward in order to allow adequate time for review outside of the meeting.

E. Clow made a motion to accept the meeting minutes of February 12, 2015 as amended. A. Swyers seconded the motion which passed unanimously with a vote of six (6) to zero (0) in favor.

**Review and Acceptance of the Accountant Report:** J. Keegan directed members to the Agricultural Commission's Account Report which was recently restructured by the Budget Committee. J. Keegan informed members that the budget was approved at the Town meeting. After a brief review, Commission found the report acceptable for approval.

E. Clow made a motion to accept the Ag Commission Accountant Report presented. A. Swyer seconded the motion which passed unanimously with a vote of six (6) to zero (0) in favor.

**Land Use Happenings:** J. Keegan directed the Commission to the Land Use Happenings portion of the Meeting Agenda.

**Conversation with Adam and Patricia Crete about Young Farmer Achievement Award from NH Farm Bureau Federation:** Adam Crete and Patricia Crete were not present. J. Keegan stated that he will contact them for an invite at a later meeting.

**Report on the ZBA decision on 208 High Street:** J. Keegan directed members to the Zoning Board of Adjustment's (ZBA) decision regarding 208 High Street. Keegan informed members that the ZBA approved a special exception upon receiving information relative to the number of animals being housed on-site, and the proposed location of the on-site well and stable. Keegan stated that this information was collected by the Ag Commission during a site visit, and was needed for the ZBA to make a decision.

**Status of Egg Production Enterprise on Rt. 4:** J. Keegan initiated a discussion relative to the status of a potential future egg production enterprise. B. Crawford, Planning Board Chair, informed the Commission that the business owners may be backing out due to perceived concerns regarding potential negative

publicity from the Concord area. J. Porter stated that discussions with the company's publicity agent led to the belief that Boscawen is still thought to be a good location for the business. J. Keegan inquired if there is anything the Commission can do to reassure the owners that no negative repercussions will come from locating the business in Boscawen. After some discussion, members agreed to generate a letter of support to the owners of the company assuring them of the communities support for the project. In addition, members agreed that generating this letter in conjunction with the Planning Board would be beneficial. J. Keegan stated that he would create a draft of this letter and submit it for review.

E. Clow made a motion to send a letter of support from the Agricultural Commission, in conjunction with the Planning Board, to the business owner in order to show support for the project. W. Bevans seconded the motion which passed unanimously with a vote of six (6) to zero (0) in favor.

**Status of Master Plan Objective 2014 and focus for 2015:** J. Keegan directed members to the meeting packet containing the 2014 Agricultural Chapter and Commission objectives of the 2014 Boscawen Master Plan (see below).

Keegan requested a discussion amongst members aimed at determining any new focuses, or whether any objectives from 2014 should be made a priority for 2015.

1. To preserve the traditional, rural and visual character of the Town of Boscawen by conserving its natural, historic, scenic, agricultural, forestry and water resources.
2. To create and implement incentives for landowners to keep their land in active agriculture and forestry management.
3. To encourage implementation of Best Management Practices for agriculture, forestry and residential land to reduce nonpoint source pollution, erosion and runoff.
4. To provide infrastructure and educational opportunities to complement and strengthen agricultural enterprises.
5. To encourage local people to purchase and to use agricultural products from area producers.
6. To encourage the rebirth of agritourism that enables farmers to diversify income and provide educational experiences for consumers.
7. To retain larger unfragmented blocks of land, especially timber parcels that are conducive to forestry management.
8. To encourage the establishment of new and/or diversified agricultural enterprises.
9. To create a farm friendly atmosphere for food production, value added and retail sales.
10. To promote more self-sufficiency of food supply in Boscawen.
11. To research the feasibility of establishing a community kitchen in Boscawen.
12. To encourage the involvement of all age groups in agricultural enterprises, especially younger people, by collaborating with schools as well as civic and religious organizations.

After some discussion regarding the 2014 objectives, the members agreed that objective #5 should be amended to read: To encourage residents to purchase and use local agricultural products to support local producers.

Upon further review, E. Clow suggested that objective #6, encouraging the rebirth of agritourism that enables farmers to diversify income and provide educational experiences for consumers, be a top focus of

the Commission. Members agreed that the current definition of agritourism and its status in New Hampshire is problematic. J. Keegan broke down the three key points relative to this Objective: #1) define Farmers – who is considered a farmer?, #2) diversifying income, #3) and providing an educational experience for consumers. Keegan stated that achieving these three hurdles is the key to success.

Further discussion ensued regarding the initiatives and methods to propagating agritourism.

T. Larochelle stated that attracting visitors, attracting them to view successful New Hampshire operations, and experience the local products, is agriculture. A. Swyers added that a hotel/stay experience on a farm, and education about the business would be appropriate. Keegan stated that he hopes the Commission will continue to put forth ideas, enhance the objectives to continue the pursuit of its mission locally and regionally in pursuit of the agritourism idea/initiative. Keegan suggested that once fully invested in this effort, the Commission could potentially broaden its voice by speaking to local publications and other types of advertising. E. Clow stated that she will champion an effort to search publications and websites to compile information dealing with agritourism in other parts of the country and abroad.

A. Swyers inquired as to why there is currently not a farmer's market located within the community. B. Crawford stated that past discussions in the community regarding the establishment of a farmers market have not been successful as the idea is open to a variety of differing opinions. In addition, a number of issues concerning permits and zoning restrictions have disrupted support.

J. Keegan stated that he has given a thorough review of the 2014 objectives, and feels that many of them are making strides towards being met. Keegan cited the 2014 municipal proceedings regarding the Wild and Scenic River Designation and the alignment with goal #1 of the objectives list. Keegan stated he will continue to review the agritourism issue, which he believes currently requires further discussion. The Commission agreed.

**Action Plan: E. Clow will distribute the results of her search to Commissioners prior to the next meeting.**

**New Business:** J. Keegan directed the Commission to the New Business portion of the agenda.

**Town Meeting Results:** The item was not discussed. However, the official ballot tally was shared with the Commissioners.

**Election of Officers:** Chair J. Keegan directed the Commission to the Town of Boscawen Agricultural Commission Statement of Purpose/Bylaws, Article C: Organization of Officers. Keegan read the following statement into the record: *1. The Agricultural Commission, at its first regular meeting following the annual Town Meeting, shall be called to order by the Chair of the previous year, if the Chair is still a member of the Board, or otherwise, by the regular member with the most years of membership. At this meeting, the Board shall organize for the election for one of its regular members as Chair, and one as Vice-Chair, and shall elect a Secretary and Treasurer.*

The Commission entered discussion regarding the filling of officer positions for 2015. J. Keegan and E. Clow both stated that they would be willing to serve another year as Chair and Vice-Chair. No other members pursued the positions.

W. Bevans made a motion to reappoint the current Chair and Vice-Chair for the upcoming year (2015). T. Larochelle seconded the motion which passed unanimously.

**Other:** There was no other business to discuss.

**Old Business:** J. Keegan directed the Commission to the Old Business portion of the meeting agenda.

**Review Action Plans from February 12<sup>th</sup> meeting:** J. Keegan directed the Commission to the February 12, 2015 Agricultural Commission meeting minutes containing the Commission's agreed upon Action Plans.

**Action Plan: The Garden Committee will ask Kellee for the park owners by March 5<sup>th</sup>.**

J. Keegan informed the Commission that he has not yet completed this task.

**Action Plan: J. Keegan to inquire of Liz Sweeney as to the Kitchen Study project report due date.**

J. Keegan directed the Commission to the latest report and conference call logs for this project located in the meeting packet. Keegan reminded members that the report calendar has the initial draft report to be completed by the end of March 2015. Keegan stated that the project committee members will review and provide input. This draft will then be submitted to USDA for comment prior to generation of the final report. Keegan said that hopefully, the report will be an approved document by the end of June 2015.

**Action Plan: Action plan draft to be generated by report calendar due date and project committee to review and provide input.**

**Legislative Update:** B. Crawford provided the Commission with updates regarding current legislative initiatives as listed below:

- Crawford informed the Commission that Farm Stand Legislation HB 660-FN was determined to be Inexpedient to Legislate. B. Crawford stated that HB 200 passed by the house and read the pertinent language for the members.

B. Crawford requested the Agricultural Commission assist with addressing an issue which has arisen with the Town Planning Board relative to the need for Site Plan review for new agricultural projects. Specifically, during recent Planning Board meetings, concerns regarding the need for Site Plan review for small agricultural projects, such as the construction of housing for chickens, have become increasingly difficult to navigate and upsetting to residents. Crawford suggested that certain thresholds could be established to guide whether or not such a review is required (such as truck trips per year, ability for public participation/invitation etc.). J. Keegan suggested that an addition to threshold conditions could be to inclusion and maintenance of certain Best Management Practices. The need for new utilities/facilities was also mentioned as possible criteria.

J. Keegan suggested that the Ag Commission continue to review the proposed changes and discuss the issue further at the next month's meeting in order to make recommendations to the Planning Board. Keegan stated that the goal would be to make the regulation as agriculturally friendly as possible while ensuring sound environmental and building practices.

**Action Plan: Review the proposed changes and discuss the issue further at the next month's meeting (4/09/2015).**

**Educational Program:** E. Clow informed the Commission that the *Raising Turkeys* and *Basics of Raising Chickens* workshop (to be provided by Dot Perkins, UNHCE Food & Agriculture) is to be rescheduled due to weather and turnout.

Clow informed the Commission that a *Native Pollinators and Housing for Native Pollinators* workshop scheduled for the April 6, 2015 and Part II of the *Native Pollinators* workshop will be held at the Community Garden on April 25, 2015. Clow informed the Commission that on May 4<sup>th</sup> a presentation by John Porter on producing quality hay (to be held at 6:30pm) will be held, in addition to other hands-on presentations such as Integrated Pest Management (IPM) for the upcoming growing season.

**Community Garden:** J. Keegan informed members that the committee has been actively discussing the request for new a sign/design, the herb garden initiative/signage, and future educational sessions at the garden.

Keegan referenced a previous discussion regarding the re-naming of the newsletter, and informed members that the initiative is being discussed as well. Keegan informed members that the inclusion of a recipe section (to include crops from the herb garden) is under discussion. Other topics relative to garden practice are being discussed for inclusion with the newsletter as well.

Keegan informed the Commission that he is continuing to research solutions to the irrigation issue at the garden. New irrigation line set-ups, resources for ideas, and pricing of materials are underway. The Commission agreed that standard equipment, able to be purchased from local retailers, should be used by to allow ease of water access for all gardeners.

J. Keegan informed the members that the Garden Committee will be meeting on March 19, 2015 from 5:30pm – 6:30pm.

**E. Clow made a motion to adjourn the Agriculture Commission meeting of 03/12/2015. The motion was seconded by A. Swyers and unanimously approved at 8:43pm.**

**Next Meeting:**

April 9, 2015 at 7:00pm

Respectfully submitted,

Gregory M. Jones  
03/18/2015