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Town of Boscawen
AGRICULTURAL COMMISSION
Boscawen Municipal Complex
MEETING MINUTES
Thursday, April 8th, 2021 at 7:00 PM

Members Present: John Keegan – Chair, Bill Bevans - Vice Chair, Julie Fournier, John Porter, Roger Sanborn & Gary Tillman

Absent- Kellee-Jo Easler- Planning & Community Development Director, Tina Larochelle & Rusty Colby

Others Present - Crystal Tuttle- Planning & Community Development Clerk, Hannah Gardner-Recording Secretary & Hanna Flanders, guest speaker from Kearsarge Food Hub

Chair John Keegan opened the public meeting at 7:00 P.M.

Chair Keegan read off the Covid-19 Public Meeting Notice of Telephonic Meetings, which reads as follows: In light of the state of emergency declared by the Governor on March 13, 2020, and to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic, the chair has determined that an emergency exists and that accordingly, until further notice, (a) members of the board may attend all board meetings telephonically, without the physical presence of a quorum; and (b) members of the public who wish to participate in hearings may, on request, participate telephonically or submit comments in writing to be included in the record of the hearing.

Roll Call: completed and guests introduced.

Chair John Keegan stated that Josh Marshall resigned as a member. Mr. Marshall has moved to Canterbury which is where he will reside. To serve on a Town board or commission, you must be a resident of Boscawen. Chair Keegan invited Mr. Marshall to attend any future meetings. He just can't vote. Chair Keegan will keep a line of communication open with Mr. Marshall for future endeavors and asked he do the same.

Review and Acceptance of Prior Meeting Minutes:

- Chair Keegan requests one correction, line 72, change 'Berkley's' to 'Berkeley's'.
- Chair Keegan requests one correction, line 111, change 'Hannah' to 'Hanna' and add her last name 'Flanders'.

Mr. John Porter motioned to accept the 02.11.21 meeting minutes as amended. Motion seconded by Ms. Julie Fournier. All in favor. None opposed.

Financial Report:

Ms. Fournier motioned to accept the 04.08.21 financials as written. Motion seconded by Mr. Roger Sanborn. All in favor. None opposed.

40 **Re-elect Officers:**

- 41 • Ms. Kellee Easler reminded Chair Keegan, that every year the Agricultural Commission
42 at its first regular meeting following the annual Town Meeting must elect Commissioners
43 for Chair and Vice Chair.
- 44 • Mr. Porter nominated Chair Keegan for Chair.
- 45 • Mr. Tillman nominated Mr. Porter for Vice Chair.

46 **Mr. Tillman motioned to nominate Mr. Keegan as Chairman and Mr. Porter as Vice**
47 **Chair. Seconded by Mr. Sanborn. All in favor. None opposed.**

48 **Old Business:**

- 49 • New Members: Chair Keegan formally welcomed Mr. Tillman and Mr. Sanborn to the
50 Commission. The current Commissioners couldn't be happier with two good
51 additions, people interested in the growth of the community and the agricultural
52 sector.

53

- 54 • By-laws: The Committee hasn't updated the by-laws since 2012. There are two items
55 in the by-laws the Commission hasn't been following. Chair Keegan referred to
56 Article C Organization and Officers. In the explanation of the Officers, it references a
57 secretary and treasurer. The Committee took an action in 2012 to make that a one-
58 person responsibility. Subsequently, with changes in the Town Office, the
59 responsibilities of the treasurer and secretary have been assumed by Town staff. Ms.
60 Katie Phelps handles the finances and Ms. Kellee Easler, and her staff take on the role
61 of secretary. Chair Keegan suggested updating these by-laws, so that part C of Article
62 C is deleted. The only current officers are the Chair and Vice Chair. The
63 Commissioners should vote on whether or not they would like to consider changing
64 Article C, Part C. Next month, the Commissioners will vote on this motion. Ms.
65 Fournier asked where the Community Garden liaison falls in the by-laws. Chair
66 Keegan said it's not in the by-laws but as Chair, he has customarily established
67 committees and named members. Chair Keegan asked that if the Committee found
68 anything else in the by-laws to be changed at the May meeting.

69 **Mr. Tillman motioned to consider action on eliminating part C. Secretary/Treasurer**
70 **in Article C of the by-laws at the next regularly scheduled monthly meeting.**
71 **Seconded by Ms. Fournier. All in favor. None opposed.**

- 72 • Community Garden: Mr. Abbe has sent a circular to the people who have signed up for
73 the Community Garden for two Saturday workdays during this month. Among the
74 activities are: putting in 16 new 12'x12' plots which will require 4 new spigots and
75 ground work. He is trying to engage more gardener's to join the group of people that
76 will be responsible for week-to-week maintenance. Mr. Abbe and a couple long time
77 gardeners have done most of this work to date. Ms. Fournier said at Town Meeting, the

78 Community Garden was represented with garden applications on a table near the
79 entrance. Also, while the Town offices are closed Community Garden applications are
80 available for people to pick up and sign up at the entry. Also, she did notice the sign is
81 out on the corner of Cornhill Road advertising the garden. Ms. Tuttle reported about
82 19 gardeners have applied and there are only a few applications left. Mr. Sanborn
83 offered to do any tilling needed. Chair Keegan asked him to talk with Mr. Abbe.

84 • Boscawen Signs: A pending task has been to replace the signs that have been stolen.
85 Chair Keegan has been in communication with Josh Marshall. Prison Industries report
86 that some of the materials needed were back ordered. They should be ready in a couple
87 of weeks.

88 • Land for Good: Mr. Porter updated Mr. Sanborn and Mr. Tillman and others on *Land*
89 *for Good*. His draft service announcement was adapted by their staff about how they
90 would offer their service to the public on matching land and farmers. The big
91 breakthrough was the appearance of the service announcement in the Department of
92 Agriculture, Markets and Food's Weekly Market Bulletin which the Commission had
93 asked Commissioner Jasper to do. Each week to date he has placed the announcement
94 near the subscription coupon, promoting the networking service. Mr. Porter has reached
95 out to employers of *Land for Good*, but they haven't responded. He brought them up to
96 date on what the Commission has done. He thinks it's great for awareness.

97 New Business:

98 • Kearsarge Food Hub, Bradford, NH: Chair Keegan introduced the guest speaker, Hanna
99 Flanders to talk about how the Kearsarge Food Hub got started, where they are at this
100 point and where they are looking to be in the future. Ms. Flanders introduced herself as a
101 co-founder of the Kearsarge Food Hub established in Bradford, NH, in 2015. Their
102 mission is to "reinvigorate their community within a restorative local food system by
103 cultivating food sovereignty, growing engaged learners and nurturing community". They
104 envision a resilient and connected community where everyone is empowered to access
105 healthy food, where local farmers are supported and the land is nourished, and where all
106 people share a common sense of place. Ms. Flanders is the Director of Community
107 Engagement. Her role is to carry out the community outreach program and marketing.
108 They got started after 4 of the 6 co-founders including Ms. Flanders, all graduated from
109 Kearsarge High School. They wanted to take action related to food production,
110 distribution and land use. These three factors were at the core of the issues about which
111 they were trying to effect positive change including impact on climate change, social
112 justice, human health, etc. They started small with a pilot project called Sweet Beet Farm
113 and Sweet Beet Farm Stand. Community members lent them land to start growing crops
114 such as onions. With community support, they built their own farm stand. People donated
115 designs for the farm stand, offered to help with logistics and farmers around the area
116 helped them gain knowledge. Many of the co-founders had experience due to the local
117 farms providing internships and outreach programs. On July 4th, 2015 they opened the
118 Sweet Beet farm stand not only to sell their own food but also to aggregate food from

119 other local farmers and producers. They wanted to provide support to the local farm
120 network in the form of a new market outlet. They ran the farm stand for two years, but
121 their goal was to move in the direction of a year-round, local food market that could
122 provide an access point to the community. They wanted to instill the idea of a grocery
123 store in which the community could eat local food all year long. Sweet Beet Market
124 opened in the Old Bradford Inn in 2017. They were invited to move there by the building
125 owners, a company called 'Unless' to make it an exciting place for the community. They
126 hosted a fundraiser for a Community Kitchen and compiled several new ideas. The
127 kitchen is a work in progress. For a period of time, it was a business incubation space for
128 the Village Café. Unfortunately, the Café didn't last past COVID.
129

- 130 • Cultivating Food Sovereignty: One initiative in their mission statement is food
131 sovereignty. It's about the right to control, as a community, how their food is grown,
132 distributed and shared. Sweet Beet market is a great avenue for achieving this initiative.
133 Ms. Flanders presentation showed a map of Sweet Beet Partners. The red dots indicated
134 the partnering farms across the region. They started with a focal point of a 30 mile radius
135 around their operations. It has grown to a 50 mile radius, but all of their produce is
136 sourced hyper locally from about 20+ vegetable farms and 70+ NH base food producers
137 and makers of different kinds such as meat, dairy, eggs and bread. The green dots
138 indicate where their food goes. They donate food to local pantries, the Sister Market,
139 Warner Public Market and they started aggregating for Fresh Start Farm in Concord, NH.
140 It is a refugee farm supported by the organization ORIS. They started working with
141 regional producers to bring in grains and coffee. Every product has a very clear label and
142 source identification. Their staff is very knowledgeable about each product and how to
143 use it. They offer recipes and weekly newsletters to inform and inspire people around
144 using local foods. There is a 25% veteran's discount on all products, all the time. They
145 also started accepting SNAP and EBT to make it more accessible to everyone.
146
- 147 • 2020 Impact of Kearsarge Food Hub: The way they coordinate their food is a unique
148 home-grown system. They created relationships with local farmers, used Google
149 Spreadsheets, took and placed orders and coordinated delivery. They built, a Cold
150 Storage facility which is used to store all of their products. Last year, over 17,000 pounds
151 of produce, meat, groceries and baked goods were donated. In response to COVID, they
152 increased their donations by 737% to serve 7+ food pantries and backpack programs that
153 reach over 200 households. They use their non-profit infrastructure to place orders with
154 farmers and deliver customers the food that they request. They made about \$45,000+ in
155 products for Warner Public Market. They also grow on their own Sweet Beet Farm over
156 13,395 pounds. They are really focusing on regenerating farming, practices that not only
157 nourish the land but are also viable in business for small farms. They are testing a paper
158 pot Trans planter which has reduced their onion planting time by weeks. Last year they
159 planted 800 onions in 2 hours. They're using chain seeders and a greens harvester for
160 their salad produce. They are gaining the experience of using new tools in order to

161 recommend them to local farmers. They are working on their Organic certification this
162 year.

163
164 • Long-term effect: The long-term effect of growing food in their area engages young folks
165 to get involved in the agricultural sector. The average age of a farmer is about 62-65
166 years old. They want young people to see the value in farming and feel it as a viable
167 career. They work with students from 1st grade to college level. It's all about helping
168 them feel inspired, showing them what's possible and where their food comes from. For
169 college students, they are working with one on developing her own farm as a new and
170 beginner farmer. Their goal is to expose people to farming and helping them become
171 farmers. It's not just isolated to student learning; they also include the whole community
172 to learn about local food. Last year, before COVID hit, they held an educational series
173 called 'Rooted'. They held it in their community room, inviting local chefs who prepared
174 a meal of their choosing and talked about any aspect about eating local foods that interest
175 the chefs.

176
177 • Nurturing Community: Their bedrock aspiration is to really nurture their community.
178 They want people to feel like they belong, that they're a part of things and that this is
179 their food system. They are involved with NOFA New Hampshire and the effort to
180 increase membership among local growers and increase organic gardening. They are
181 active in their community, participating in 4th of July and grilling competitions. Their
182 FEED Kearsarge partnership (Food, Expansion, Education, and Distribution) started last
183 year among community organizations interested in advancing food security for folks.
184 Some projects they are continuing this year are 'Tray it Forward' on Spring Ledge Farm.
185 They allowed people to sponsor a tray for a community member in need. Sweet Beet
186 Farm coordinated all of their resources to distribute 250 gardens in a tray to food insecure
187 households and inspire them to grow their own food. Colby Sawyer College students
188 helped them put out educational materials all summer. In Bradford, they built three new
189 garden beds. One at the elementary school, one at the food pantry and one at a young
190 boy's home to help people learn how to grow food and take control. In addition, they
191 hold workshops, host film screenings to look at Native American food ways and
192 partnered with Native American Food Ways to talk about how it relates to their
193 community and how they can support appropriate food for that community in their area.
194 From this partnership, they are working on an Abenaki Seed project where heritage seeds
195 will be passed out to local growers in the near future. Farmers can grow the crops and
196 then donate them to the Abenaki Food pantry.

197
198 • Developing a Food Hub Network in NH: Sweet Beet owners started with a local food
199 promotion grant in 2017 and finished it in 2019. , The purpose was an assessment of the
200 Kearsarge Area. They met with local farmers, restaurants and institutions to see the two
201 sides of the equation: who is growing food and who wants to buy more food. The grant
202 led them to the concept of what is really needed, a State-wide Food Hub Network. This
203 would allow collaboration to occur with Food Hubs and partnering farms to meet

204 institutional demands and/or the needs of larger markets. They are now in the second
205 grant phase with the ‘Specialty Crop Block Grant’. Specifically, they are looking at
206 developing a network among all the partnering food hubs. It’s a great representation of
207 how all these pockets of local food activity can work together. If Kearsarge Food Hub
208 collaborated with a shared network, they could potentially build a central facility and
209 have trucks that move food and work to create farmer advocacy networks. They are
210 waiting to review the business plan that will come of the grant. It will require a full-time
211 logistics operator to manage the different food hubs and figure out how they can
212 collaborate and amplify their connections across the State. They are a 501c3 Donor and
213 Community supported nonprofit. Last year, even with COVID, over 40 people
214 volunteered in their operations. Eighty seven people signed up for their Grow with Us
215 Monthly Giving Program and 360 individuals donated in 2020. Looking to the future,
216 they are interested in how to spread this message, being more accessible to more people
217 and creating more space and jobs.

218

- 219 • Questions/Observations from Committee: Mr. Porter asked where they get their dairy and
220 what kind of products, they are handling. They get milk and cheese from Contocook
221 Creamery. Based on customer demand, they get raw milk from Brookford farm. They
222 started working with a lot of great creameries such as Abbott Creamery and Blue Ledge
223 Farm. They use Walpole Creamery for ice cream and started incorporating Narragansett
224 cheese from Rhode Island. They are working within the vision of Food Solutions New
225 England, to increase food production in New England, up to 50% of what is consumed is
226 produced locally by 2060. To fill this vision, they need to think regionally as well. Chair
227 Keegan asked what essential elements to have driven the growth and evolution since
228 2015. The founders have been very invested in their mission and volunteered on
229 innumerable occasions. In addition, the founding community members and so many
230 different people have given a great deal to their mission such as donating land or money
231 and volunteering at events. The owners of the Bradford Inn are also major investors.
232 Their support and enthusiasm have added to making the business viable. Mr. Porter asked
233 for clarification around sharing their kitchen. They were exploring a few different things.
234 They had a café renting the kitchen. It closed down during COVID. The kitchen is
235 currently closed for renovation. They have plans to, hopefully, fill the space with a focus
236 on educational and volunteer opportunities. They also want to incorporate meal prep,
237 whether to donate it to the Senior Center for Meals on Wheels or sell through Sweet Beet
238 Market. There is an exciting project underway in Warner. The Harris Lodge was
239 purchased by Main Street Warner Inc. They have designs for a food processing facility.
240 Chair Keegan asked what the role of local Government has been. They work closely with
241 the Planning Board and town government to ensure that on their end that they are doing
242 everything appropriately. As a non-profit they haven’t found a way to engage
243 appropriately with the government. They are very interested in getting into more
244 advocacy. Mr. Porter asked about what public health people they are working with. They
245 are inspected by DHHS. All relevant programs meet code. Chair Keegan asked, given
246 what Ms. Flanders has seen with this Ag Commission, what would she see as our role in

247 supporting the concept of the regional hubs and aggregation of their related
248 organizations? She mentioned with the grant how they are currently working on the
249 expansion of a regional food hub network. Another recommendation is farmer
250 collaboration that specifically focuses on supporting farmers in identifying their needs
251 such as access to land, business training and product development.
252

- 253 • There is a gray area now where farmers seek to be viable with more diverse offerings.
254 They are now hosting events on their property. It becomes a question of whose job it is to
255 regulate these offerings. They had a meeting to examine agritourism and what effect it
256 has on their community. Generally, to sum it up, more farmer coordination across the
257 board for our region is helpful. Mr. Porter asked if they set up farmer markets or channel
258 it all through their system. They are channeling it all from their system. In the past, they
259 have set up farmers markets but the goal of those was to move a bunch of food or as a
260 marketing tool. They are invited to a lot of farmers markets, but they have their hands full
261 with their capacity maxed out in their operations. They would love to support farmers
262 markets and farmers getting involved in them. Mr. Sanborn asked if Ms. Flanders needs
263 market space in this area. He has a location on Main St at the Junction of Route 3 and 4.
264 His wife mentioned that she would be interested in doing a stand to sell goods. Ms.
265 Flanders stated this was a great example of connecting people with land that's available
266 and it seems like a great networking opportunity. They are approached a lot with these
267 types of opportunities, but they don't participate directly. Instead, they would love to
268 support others in doing so. One of Ms. Flanders' dreams is a happy hour where people
269 want to get involved with others who have land and equipment and want to get started
270 farming. She would love to keep in contact with Mr. Sanborn because there is a ton of
271 opportunity out there. Chair Keegan asked Ms. Flanders to send a copy of her
272 presentation to Ms. Hannah Gardner to make it part of the minutes and use it to disperse
273 the word.
274
- 275 • Chair Keegan has been contacted by a Cooperative Extension Educator who works with
276 the NH Food Alliance. They asked him to participate in a webinar during May to talk
277 about Agricultural Commissions. He is waiting for more information. He will represent
278 the Boscawen Commission and also asked if any other Commissioners would like to
279 participate. As soon as he gets clarification, he will send out an email. Mr. Porter will
280 send him talking points from a previous presentation in the Monadnock Region that Chair
281 Keegan could use for reference.
282
- 283 • Mr. Porter has joined the Economic Development Committee as an AgCom
284 representative. He has attended two meetings. The last meeting was a broad perspective
285 meeting outlining their goals. They focused on the future of King St, including highway
286 development and, possibly two more traffic circles for Boscawen. Mr. Porter suggested a
287 sign on Depot St. pointing people from the bike trail up to town. The Committee has a
288 field trip on Depot St next week. The planning group may bring in regional planning

289 commission resources and maybe get a sign made at the prison industry. They want to
290 entice more rail trail users into Town for food and services.

291

- 292 • Mr. Porter asked for guidance on the sign directing trail users to King Street because at
293 one point they talked about trying to find an agricultural link for that sign. He doesn't
294 know if it is practical. There are some restaurants using local foods but not all and not
295 year round. He asked for creative ideas to promote the link on the trail. An example he
296 stated was "services and stores a quarter mile up the hill." He doesn't know how to do it
297 without misrepresenting local food availability. Ms. Fournier suggested connecting to
298 Crete's Farm Stand. Mr. Sanborn suggested putting a stand somewhere near Depot Street,
299 perhaps working with the Bradford folks and selling local and regional fresh produce.
300 Mr. Porter suggested making the sign generic and putting a weather protected pocket with
301 agricultural information in it. He said at the beginning of the Bike Trail, near his home,
302 they have a similar information pocket, and someone comes buy to refill it regularly.
303 Chair Keegan said they could use the cards the Commission had printed a couple years
304 ago. They list all the farms in the area. In addition, he stated Hackleboro Farm is starting
305 to use their land next to Cumberland Farms. That may be a good venue for selling local
306 products and promoting local agriculture. Mr. Tillman said research should be done on
307 the Penacook Market. Ms. Fournier said it's a good point to see what is happening with it
308 and what does the opportunity bring if they aren't opening. She asked if Josh Marshall
309 will be doing his pumpkins. Chair Keegan has not heard from him. Ms. Fournier
310 suggested if Josh Marshall doesn't grow his pumpkins that Mr. Sanborn's land would be
311 a great place to grow a pumpkin patch. Mr. Sanborn agreed and asked for more input as
312 far as what people would like to do. Chair Keegan asked Mr. Tillman to do a little
313 research on the Penacook Market. Mr. Bevans said Penacook Market is trying to get into
314 Bedde Electric for a Monday market in the front section They are going to try to work it
315 with 'Making Matters'. They are trying to negotiate with Deedee Russel but she doesn't
316 want people spending money on property because she wants it to be free. Mr. Porter said
317 once the Roundabout plantings are in place, the Town sign may need some refreshing. He
318 and his wife have put it on his to do list for this summer.

319 **Next Meeting:**

- 320 • Thursday, May 13th, 2021 @ 7pm.

321 **Adjournment:**

- 322 • Motion to adjourn by Mr. Tillman; seconded by Mr. Sanborn. All in favor. None
323 opposed.

324 *Respectfully submitted, Hannah Gardner*