

**Town of Boscawen
AGRICULTURAL COMMISSION
Boscawen Municipal Complex
MEETING MINUTES
Thursday, January 14th, 2021 at 7:00 PM**

Members Present: John Keegan – Chair, Julie Fournier, John Porter, Rusty Colby, Josh Marshall

Absent- Bill Bevans–Vice Chair, Kellee-Jo Easler- Planning & Community Development Director, Tina Larochelle

Others Present - Crystal Tuttle- Planning & Community Development Clerk & Hannah Gardner-Recording Secretary

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.

Review and Acceptance of Prior Meeting Minutes:

- Ms. Fournier requests one correction, line 37 remove the word “observer” and change to “Communicator”.

Josh Marshall motioned to approve the 11.12.20 minutes as amended. Motion seconded by Rusty Colby. All in favor. None opposed.

Financial Report:

Chair Keegan stated the December 2020 financials showed that the only income is from the Garden plots and there were some expenses for the garden. Chair Keegan stated the major change in the financial report through January 14th, 2021 is the \$300 reduction that the Commission needs to formalize. A motion needs to be made to reduce the \$2000 per year budget to \$1700.

Julie Fournier motioned to accept the 12.10.20 financials as written. Motion seconded by Josh Marshall. All in favor. None opposed.

Rusty Colby motioned to accept the \$300 reduction in the budget. Motion seconded by Josh Marshall. All in favor. None opposed.

**John Porter motioned to approve the financial report through January 14th, 2021.
Motion seconded by Julie Fournier. All in favor. None opposed.**

Old Business:

- **Rail Trail Initiative:** Chair Keegan spoke with Ms. Easler about anything going on in the town that could be relative to this idea. She stated the Select Board is in the process of creating an Economic Development Committee. The Rail Trail is one of the issues on that agenda. Among the items discussed are outreach to local merchants, including a survey. Chair Keegan suggested the Select Board look for collaboration with Cooperative Extension for help from Jared Reynolds. Ms. Easler asked if anyone on the AgCom Commission would be interested in becoming a member of the Economic Development Committee. Mr. Porter stated he was interested in talking to Ms. Easler about it more in detail. Ms. Fournier had talked to Mr. Jeff Abbe about how the snowmobiles come up from the rail trail now to go to the Sunoco station to gas up. Mr. Abbe thinks there is a site along King St. near Dunkin Donuts. Ms. Fournier asked if anyone has noticed the sign on King St. that says ‘Rail Trail Access’. Mr. Porter thinks the snowmobile trail is more obvious than the bicycle trail for accessing King Street. Mr. Marshall thinks the snowmobile trail is directly across the street from the Sunoco station, in between the house across the street and the cemetery. Mr. Keegan stated Ms. Easler mentioned reaching out to the Conservation Commission in addition to the Agricultural Commission. Mr. Porter stated it would be nice if the Economic Development Committee could tie their initiative into Agricultural. He noted many King Street businesses use local produce. Mr. Porter will develop a local message with these restaurants to give them credit for using local produce. Chair Keegan and Ms. Easler talked about promoting the Crete’s business in some way or adding a new service at the stand they open during the summer. Bicycles come t right onto River Rd. from the Rail Trail.
- **Farm Link:** Mr. Porter spoke with our contact Jim Hafner, executive Director of *Land for Good*. Mr. Hafner apologized for not having anything in writing, but their office had been hit with COVID. Chair Keegan and Mr. Porter have submitted to *Land for Good* a rough draft of on how to start promoting Farm Link. *Land for Good* asked who would be paying the fee for having notices in the Market Bulletin. Mr. Porter has responded it will not be an issue. *Land for Good* staff are drafting an ad for the Marketing Bulletin promoting their service. The Commissioner was open to *Land for Good* having a regular spot. *Land for Good* staff is nervous about the wording because they don’t offer all of the services contained in our draft, staffing being the principal item. Mr. Porter said by next meeting they should have something going.
- **Annual Report:** Mr. Marshall edited and finalized the annual report. Chair Keegan thanked all who contributed.
- **Boscawen Town Signs:** Mr. Marshall asked if someone could email him a reminder of

which signs need replacing. Mr. Porter stated we need apple, blueberry and pumpkin signs. Ms. Fournier added that one of each kind is needed. Mr. Marshall will submit the order to Prison Industries.

- Chair Keegan reported a Community Garden Committee meeting is scheduled for February 8th, Ms. Fournier as well as Mr. Jeff Abbe will be in attendance. They will be updating the paperwork for the next community garden season as well as discuss expanding the garden again. The number of new plots is unclear at this time. In addition, the numbering system will be revamped to accommodate this and future expansions. If a member has an idea, please email Chair Keegan or Ms. Fournier so they can add it to the meeting's agenda.

New Business:

- Agricultural Community: Monadnock Region: Chair Keegan attended virtual event to promote and celebrate agriculture in the Monadnock Region. He was very impressed with both the depth and breadth of the community wide agricultural action that takes place in the Monadnock Region. Four different individuals talked about their roles. One person was a restaurant owner, another a producer, one woman organized and ran community gardens and educated children and another speaker had been Chair of the NH House Agricultural Committee and spoke about systemic issues. It was very well done and engaging. Chair Keegan asked if anyone had seen the program or had comments. Ms. Fournier asked where Chair Keegan heard about it. It was on the Market Bulletin. Mr. Marshall could not attend but stated they do an amazing job. Mr. Porter reinforced that sentiment and reminded Commissioners he had spoken with them and was very impressed. There were about 70 individuals on Zoom.
- Farm Bureau National Convention: Mr. Marshall stated every year the American Farm Bureau holds a convention. It is a great opportunity for farmers around the country to take a week off from work and get together. They did a great job transitioning to a virtual convention this year. What you miss in the virtual convention is what's not on the agenda: being in a hotel with other farmers and making connections, walking around and seeing other farmers. With the virtual convention they did a good job of having everything live but also accessible 'On Demand'. They had speakers such as a retired Navy Seal, Mike Rowe (Dirty Jobs) and the CEO of Land O' Lakes. The Delegates session was even harder to do because there are hundreds of individuals debating policy. They did a great job virtually considering they have never done it before. Mr. Porter participated for specific event/presentations over three and a half days. He believed the speakers were very enlightening. The debate teams and discussion teams were very impressive. Everyone was very courteous to one another; they were trying to create a discussion. He felt like the technology didn't take away from the convention. The one word he took away from the convention was 'pivoting'. It is the term for what people are doing to respond to COVID on their farms. A lot of the workshops had to do with marketing and value added. Mr. Marshall stated we take for granted the idea of someone

driving to your farm and purchasing from the farmer directly. This is very foreign to a lot of sectors of agricultural across the country. People from Virginia, Iowa and Nebraska are always amazed that NH has farms that are on 20 acres and are able to make a living selling carrots and beets. He referred to Mr. Porter talking about pivoting shows that some of these folks have never considered selling a product from their farm or had to do it. We may look at other parts of the country and think they have way more agricultural than we do but they look to us and are impressed with what our farmers do accomplish.

- Chair Keegan follows the National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition (NSAC), which monitors and lobbies for federal policies supporting small and medium size farmers. They are gearing up to support new programming focused on regional markets, farm to customer, value add and financing through the Department of Agricultural for small producers. Their weekly publication is available on the Internet where they layout proposals being made to the incoming Administration relative to smaller producers.
- Mr. Porter stated that on February 12th and 13th, the kick-off of the Virtual NH and Forest Exposition will begin. There will be key speakers during the day and then they will kick off the series of videos that will be offered monthly the rest of the year. There will be a virtual trade show of just business cards to give publicity to their Agriculture businesses. They are struggling to make it work because of COVID and their limited budget. Mr. Marshall said he spoke with Gail McWilliam and sent her a link to the Farm Bureau video page. They have a ton of videos that may be useful.
- **Next Meeting:** February 11th, 2021 at 7 P.M.

Adjournment:

- Motion to adjourn by Mr. Colby; seconded by Ms. Fournier. All in favor. None opposed.

Respectfully submitted, Hannah Gardner