

**Town of Boscawen
AGRICULTURAL COMMISSION
Boscawen Municipal Complex
MEETING MINUTES
Thursday, May 13th, 2021, at 7:00 PM**

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

Absent- Tina Larochelle

Others Present - Crystal Tuttle- Planning & Community Development Clerk, Chris Waldron, Kellee-Jo Easler- Planning & Community Development Director & Ralph Odell

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:

- Chair Keegan requests one correction, line 62, change “Cis” to “C is”.
- Mr. John Porter requests one correction, line 95, change “employers” to “staff members”.
- Chair Keegan requests one correction, line 132, and change “avenue” to “venue”.
- Chair Keegan requests one correction, line 155, add the word “at” between ‘own’ and ‘Sweet Beet’.
- Mr. John Porter requests one correction, line 158, change “Trans planter” to “transplanted”.
- Chair Keegan requests one correction, line 210, change “of the grant” to “from the grant”.
- Mr. Porter requests one correction, line 219, and change “diary” to “dairy”.
- Chair Keegan requests one correction, line 241, strikethrough “that” before “they are doing”.
- Chair Keegan requests one correction, line 258, and change “all from” to “all

through”.

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

Financial Report: Chair Keegan reported the Commission’s major and only revenue is coming from the community garden.

Mr. Roger Sanborn motioned to accept the 05.13.21 financials as written. Motion seconded by Mr. Tillman. All in favor. None opposed.

Old Business:

Motion made by Mr. Tillman to vote on the motion of acceptance to eliminate Secretary and Treasurer in Section C of the by-laws. Seconded by Mr. Sanborn. All in favor. None opposed.

- The Commissioners need to sign the originals of the revised by laws. PCD Easler can have them available either upstairs or downstairs in a manila envelope with a pen. If Commissioners want to come up to the office, they will need to call and arrange a time. Once everyone signs the revised by laws, Town Clerk Nicole Hoyt will take the steps needed to make them part of the Town’s official record. Chair Keegan asked the Commissioners to sign it before the next meeting.
- **Community Garden:** Ms. Fournier talked with Jeff Abbe who reported the water is up and running. They had a leak, but he took care of it. Some gardeners are already planting tomatoes. Mr. Abbe reports the community garden is at about 95% capacity. Mr. Abbe believes that Memorial Day weekend will be the turning point for people wanting a garden. Most of the plots that are left will probably be taken. Chair Keegan spoke with Mr. Abbe who said there are a total of 90 plots and only 11 remain available. The NH Gleans Partnership continues. The NH Gleans Program harvests and distributes food that would otherwise go to waste. It then goes into the food system to provide nutritious food for those in need through Community Church’s and food banks. Hillary Bailey, from the Merrimack County Conservation District, is their contact person. Mr. Abbe built and installed a tool kiosk at the garden for gardening equipment such as rakes, shovels and wheelbarrows. Now people don’t have to bring all their own equipment. The Commissioners should be proud that they can offer these benefits to the Community.
- **Land for Good:** Chair Keegan sent out a copy of *Land for Good’s* media kit. At last month’s meeting they talked about possibly using the town website and Facebook page to post information about *Land for Good’s* services for the general public. He asked the Committee to look at their communication messages. He asked each Commissioner to select 1 or 2 for PCD Easler or Ms. Tuttle to post. The messages could be swapped out periodically. He would like the Commission to get started with the messaging because you never know when someone is looking for land to farm. It is a simple way to connect people with an organization looking at it for both New Hampshire and New England wide farmland supply and demand. Chair Keegan asked if any members had a favorite candidate from the sheets. Mr. Porter suggested to start using them at the top and rotate through.

Ms. Fournier motioned to rotate the communication messages on the town website and Facebook. Seconded by Mr. Sanborn. All in favor. None opposed.

- Chair Keegan noticed that the Weekly Market Bulletin hasn't had the advertisement for *Land for Good* in for the last couple of weeks. He asked if there has been a change or if there are space issues. Mr. Porter assumes the issue is space because they aren't running their subscription ads anymore. This time of year, the regular ads pick-up and they probably just ran out of space. Ms. Fournier did notice the additional ads and she understands if the Department is getting revenue from certain ads the change makes sense. Mr. Porter will monitor the situation and speak to Commissioner Jasper if needed.
- Mr. Porter reported that the Economic Committee is going to start visiting local businesses as part of their meeting agenda. To date the meetings have been a big picture view of looking at the future of King St, the Circle, sidewalks and lighting on the Main St. They are going to focus on specific things as they move along. Their next meeting, they were invited to Avaloch. He thinks Adele Sanborn will issue an invitation to the Committee as well. They have also discussed what funding may be coming in the future from different government sources that may move the projects along.
- NH Food Alliance Café: Chair Keegan along with Eric Sartelle, from Lee and Theresa Walker, from Durham formed a panel for a webinar a week ago. They talked about the creation of Ag Commission's. Mr. Sartelle provided background on NH Agricultural law and related resources. Ms. Walker talked about the range of work Durham Ag Comm has done with an emphasis on planning, zoning, maintaining land for agriculture and efforts to make Durham agriculture friendly. The Durham Ag Comm is in a good situation because some of their members are also faculty at the UNH. So, she has a pool of highly skilled and committed volunteers as well as deep support from the town planner. Chair Keegan reinforced the range of opportunities Ag Comms provide both town government and farmers for local food production, maintenance of our rural character and practical benefits such as the Community Garden, our Community Kitchen Study and the opportunity we used to attract a Pete & Jerry's chicken farm to Boscawen after rejections in two other towns. The NH Food Alliance posted the webinar which includes half hour presentations and half hour Q & A. The resources are also available on their website. Finally, he mentioned a Cooperative Extension test to determine how Ag friendly a municipality is. Chair Keegan will have Ms. Tuttle send each Commissioner a copy to give a sense of the questions Commissioners should consider as agricultural or agriculturally related questions or opportunities arise in Boscawen.
- Chair Keegan mentioned information Commissioners received regarding composting food waste. He also did some research. Dean Hollins, Public Works Director, reported there used to be a Recycling Committee when there was a recycling market but when that market disappeared the Recycling Committee did as well. There was not a specific compost program to remove food waste from the waste stream. Also, he did not have a sense of the percentage of food waste in the town's total waste stream. Chair Keegan asked for reactions to this information. Observations included: it is something people do on their own property; the idea does not fit into a community wide aggregated effort. Mr. Porter thinks the approach should be educational and encourage people to compost. He suggested using the News Vine. He makes compost and reports it takes a fair amount of garbage out of the waste stream. Another benefit people need to be aware of is enriching

their soil rather than the landfill. Ms. Fournier asked if information from Cooperative Extension, such as the Verme Composting, could be used in the News Vine. She can envision the Agricultural Commission promoting something like this. She would be interested in working on the idea more. Ms. Tuttle reported she attended the webinar which illustrated starting small scale with people doing composting in their own backyards. The more traction it gained people began looking to the town for support. She would like to assist with a small kick-off that may gain more attention. Ms. Fournier asked if the Community Garden has a role, such as putting out bins where people can throw their food waste. Then the compost could be used there. Chair Keegan would prefer starting with the individual homeowner educational programs showing how to do home composting. The starting point would follow the model Mr. Porter suggested. Mr. Sanborn suggested involving the Elementary School. Chair Keegan said he sees that as an option. Ms. Fournier has had experience with Cooperative Extension doing Verme Composting which might be another step.

New Business: Chair Keegan introduced Mr. Chris Waldron to the Commission. He recently moved to North Water St. where he would like to start a business at his home. He is a brewer and has been looking into a range of product options. PCD Director Kellee Easler spoke with Mr. Waldron. The area is zoned agricultural, and it may be possible to support his business plan as an agricultural enterprise. Chair Keegan invited Mr. Waldron to this meeting to talk about his vision and what he hopes to do. He asked Mr. Waldron to make a short presentation. Chair Keegan asked Commissioners to hold their questions until after his presentation.

- Mr. Waldron started brewing in 2017. He and his wife have always talked about opening their own brewery. He has worked part-time at breweries in Salem, where he used to live and in Derry. He's worked 15 years for *Whole Foods Market*, currently as a produce manager. They envision a small-scale operation with a hometown feel. They also needed more space because they want to grow their family. They need to be somewhere they can call home. He wants to keep it small and at his old home the houses were so close, and it wasn't the right spot. They sold their home in Salem back in January and immediately started looking. Ultimately, they found this house in Boscawen and loved it. Mr. Waldron is unsure what his limited agricultural background could bring to this business venture, but he understands there is possibility to grow hops and fruit as brewing ingredients while also selling agricultural products like eggs and vegetables. His vision is to produce craft beverages on a small scale. The Craft industry is booming right now. We are surrounded by other breweries so a craft brewery in Boscawen provides a big draw. He would open on the weekends, with outdoor seating, for tastings. PCD Easler told Mr. Waldron that it could be an agricultural adventure if its owned agricultural products totaled at least 35% of his gross sales. PCD Easler noted the Zone he is living in is Agricultural, which would likely qualify the business as Agritourism if he meets the 35% threshold. In summary he is talking to the Commission to get ideas and hear input from Commissioners about the feasible for his ideas. This will help him plot a way forward.
- Ms. Fournier introduced herself to Mr. Waldron and asked how much acreage he has. He has about an acre and a quarter. Ms. Fournier asked, if when he referred to growing hops, was he referencing where he lived before. Yes, he was. She asked how much acreage he

grew. A 10th of an acre. Ms. Fournier mentioned there is a gentleman in town who sells peppers. She asked what he was thinking of in terms of vegetables for the farm stand. She is trying to gage the competition. He said kale, zucchini, peas and beans. She asked if they are growing blueberries. Yes, they do have blueberries on the property which he would typically use to flavor the craft beer.

- Chair Keegan asked where exactly he is located. At 84 North Water St. His house is green with a red barn.
- Mr. Bill Bevans asked how many chickens they plan to have. They have 6 right now. He asked if there are plans to expand the flock. Mr. Waldron isn't sure. Mr. Bevans said if he is going to do a farm stand, 6 chickens won't produce that many eggs, especially in the winter. He also asked Mr. Waldron if the farm stand is mostly to show the agricultural side of the brewery. He confirmed the farm stand would show the agricultural purpose. Mr. Bevans doesn't understand why he wasn't directed to Home Base Business which would be acceptable in the agricultural zone. Mr. Waldron is open to whatever needs to be done to make it work. The agricultural side was a suggestion to examine with the Ag Comm. Mr. Bevans said the farm stand would be great to have and he is entitled to it. As far as the percentage, if he has a dozen eggs that he is selling and he sells them all, that's 100%. Concerning agritourism, if he is having weekly or monthly beer tastings, he's not sure the tastings would be considered agritourism. PCD Easler said they discussed using the agricultural zone designation to simplify Mr. Waldron's permitting. The question emerging is, can he produce sufficient agricultural products for the brewery to be considered an agricultural enterprise. The Town would want an Ag Comm site review report with recommendation(s) for the planning board following a walk through. Chair Keegan categorized this as a journey of discovery. The Ag Commission is evaluating the agricultural aspect whereas Mr. Waldron is trying to fulfill his dream of opening a brewery.
- Chair Keegan said a site visit would give him a better sense of if the Waldron's vision fits as agricultural or not. Mr. Bevans and Mr. Tillman will also participate in the site visit. This will give both parties time to discuss and reflect on the information that has emerged. Ms. Fournier asked if there is a local winery in town with tastings. Mr. Sanborn said that he believes she is referring to a business in Webster at the corner of Rt. 127 and Arnold St. Mr. Sanborn said he has been there, and the owner has been building his business for a while. It is a great place, and he believes it is an agricultural venue. He thinks there needs to be leeway given to start this type of business so the owner can have time to expand. He suggested potentially asking neighbors to use their land for agricultural production.
- Mr. Bevans asked PCD Easler if Mr. Waldron would qualify for home-based business. She said she isn't sure if he would be under home base minor or major. Mr. Bevans asked Mr. Waldron if he is allowed to sell beer of this property. Currently, no he needs a license which involves the Town's approval. He asked if he would be serving food at the tastings. Mr. Waldron is thinking about serving food during tastings but needs a separate license to do so. Mr. Waldron is also thinking about local restaurants that may be able to cater his events. Mr. Bevans said, at tastings, you are only allowed 4 ounces if you don't

have food. Mr. Bevans observed that brewing as the business grows and becomes more time consuming and would still require time dedicated to the farm stand. Looking more broadly, neighbors, who come and go, might not be supportive and raise questions. Mr. Bevans noted Jim Richardson, owner of the ice cream business on Water St., got a special exemption because he knew, eventually, he would have a farm and sell a lot of ice cream. It helped avoid issues when he put it in. He just wants Mr. Waldron to be aware and take precautions to protect his future plans. PCD Easler noted that if there was ever a change in the business itself, he could amend his site plan.

- Chair Keegan brought the discussion to a close telling Mr. Waldron when is ready for the three Commissioners to do the site visit to call him and he will put it together. Other members are welcome to join.
- Chair Keegan proposed that Ms. Fournier become an alternate Commissioner. Originally, she was going to leave the Commission in July because of work issues related to her schedule but that did not happen. She would like to continue as an alternate commissioner. Once the Committee votes on it, PCD Easler can bring it up to the Select Board to approve.

Mr. Porter motioned to propose Ms. Fournier as an alternate Commissioner. Seconded by Mr. Tillman. All in favor. None opposed.

- Chair Keegan, responding to Ms. Fournier's request for Circle Committee update, stated the Circle Committee has town water connected at the roundabout. The meter and back flow preventer are in. They are waiting for the inspections before becoming operational. Once the inspection is completed, they will be able to turn the water on. The 1,300 feet of the irrigation line from the corner of Fisher Ave and Harris Hill Road is laid to the Circle. Circle Committee members have removed the bark mulch from where they are going to plant the gardens and started digging holes for 70 plus plants. This weekend they plan to get as many of them in as Black Forest can provide. Once the plants are in the ground, Doug Thomson, will put the drip lines to the plants. Mr. Porter asked if it was a good economical option. Chair Keegan said they started with roughly a \$24,000 budget. The total out-of-pocket cost looks like \$10,000 to \$12,000. They have raised money, while receiving goods and services from a wide range of businesses, and other organizations. A member of the Committee, Beverly Drouin has kept a presence on the local Facebook page. As a result, they have had many donations under \$200. With design changes and other savings strategies, the cost is about half what they anticipated when they started.
- **Next Meeting:**
- Thursday, June 10th, 2021 @ 7pm.

Adjournment:

- **Motion to adjourn by Mr. Tillman; Seconded by Mr. Sanborn. All in favor. None opposed.**

Respectfully submitted, Hannah Gardner