

Town of Boscawen
Agricultural Commission
Meeting Minutes – Final
Boscawen Municipal Complex
September 13, 2018 7:00 pm

Members Present: John Keegan - Chair, John Porter, Julie Fournier, Tina Larochelle and Rusty Colby

Members Absent: Bill Bevans-Vice Chair and Josh Marshall

Others Present: Alan Hardy - Co-Administrator, Linda Chandonnet – Recording Secretary

Chairman Keegan called the meeting to order at 7:04pm.

Roll call made by Chair Keegan.

Review and Acceptance of prior meeting's minutes:

Chair Keegan asked if anyone had any changes to the minutes from 08/09/2018. The following changes were made: Line 98 – Change date to September 13, 2018.

Motion made to accept the August minutes as amended by Mr. Porter and seconded by Ms. Larochelle. All in favor, none opposed.

Accountant Report was reviewed by the Commission. Chair Keegan mentioned that the \$500.00 Bode Donation has been deposited. Ms. Larochelle asked if the money can be spent and Chair Keegan replied; yes, but in order for the town to accept it, the money would have to be designated for a very specific use and go into a trust fund.

Motion made to accept the Accountant Report by Ms. Larochelle and seconded by Ms. Fournier. All in favor, none opposed.

Commissioners Visit:

Chair Keegan said when he had last talked to Commissioner Jasper, they had decided to set aside two dates, September 17th as the primary and a backup date of September 24th. Currently the primary date is OK. The question is how to manage the visit. As discussed at last month's meeting, the plan is for a short visit to Mr. Porter and Mr. Marshall's farms. Mr. Porter suggested that Commissioner Jasper might hop on the chopper tractor at Crete's for a ride to experience harvesting as the rows of corn are coming at you. Chair Keegan said he can meet the Commissioner at 8:15 at Hannah Dustin Park and Ride on the 17th. From there everyone will meet at Mr. Porter's house at 8:30. Other stops discussed were Highway View, Tom Giovagnoli egg farm and various Water Street sites, perhaps including Avaloch Farm Music Institute ending at Richardson's. Chair Keegan mentioned that he will only be available until noon. Mr. Colby offered to give the Commissioner a ride back to his vehicle from Richardson's when the tour is finished. Chair Keegan stated it will happen rain or shine. He will reach out to Mr. Marshall and keep him updated.

Farm Tax Relief Bill:

Chair Keegan mentioned that Mr. Porter was on NPR public radio's The Exchange today at 9:00am and was on about barns along with two other members of the Barn Committee.

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Mr. Porter stated that today Mr. Marshall and others from farm Bureau met with Senator Watters to follow up on the tax relief bill. This is to provide tax relief for owners in the first few years that a new agricultural structure is built. The idea is, if possible, to match this up with a payback period. Senator Watters, was a key sponsor of RSA 79E and is logical partner to work on similar tax relief for farmers. Mr. Porter and Mr. Marshall met with the Senator over a month ago. *See August 2016 minutes for details.* Today's meeting was very informal and just a touch base meeting. Senator Watters has talked to a few senators and legislatures and said feedback has been positive so far. There is another tentative meeting scheduled of November 8th, 2:00pm at N.H. Farm Bureau. The goal is for Rob Johnson to have roughed out bill modeled on RSA 79E. Senator Watters thinks this is a good approach, there is not much resistance and he thinks support can be bipartisan. Senator Watters has asked Mr. Marshall to find support from agriculture friendly legislators and to involve both parties. Senator Watters is shooting for December or January to start working the draft into the legislative system. Key items Senator Watters keeps in the foreground are that this is enabling legislation and that we leave the option in for deferred or forgiven taxes. Senator Watters also wants to make sure this doesn't look like RSA 79E. He wants to avoid any confusion for the 79E supporters. The only concern he has identified is if a borderline agricultural business tries to take advantage of this legislation. Mr. Porter added that Senator Watters realizes that this legislation is not going to save farms in New Hampshire, but it shows a friendliness for Agriculture and might promote young folks who are overwhelmed with their taxes and need a hand up during the first few years farming. Chair Keegan added that this would be an important conversation to have with Commissioner Jasper during his visit along with asking his support for the idea of training appraisers about the tax realities for agricultural structures.

Other Land Use Issues:

Mr. Hardy stated the Town of Boscawen has submitted an application to the Department Of Transportation through the Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP) for \$463,000.00 towards the acquisition of the last 6/10ths of a mile of the Northern Rail Trail. The process has not gone as expected. Town officials thought the State would jump in and assert jurisdiction, as they have the right of first refusal, but this has yet to happen Jack Shields from Friends of the Northern Rail Trail in Merrimack County (FNRT) has also been heavily involved in this process. We have the support of FNRT which has been successful at fund raising. The grant does require a 20% local match. One way or another we could end up acquiring the last Pan Am section in Boscawen and have the Rail Trail complete to Hannah Dustin Island with, possibly, a parking lot. A decision will be made by January 2019.

Mr. Hardy gave an update on the override votes in the Legislature. The bio-mass bill veto was over-turned but not the net-metering veto. This means net-metering is back to square one. There may be another attempt to pass this in the upcoming legislative session.

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Old Business:

Chair Keegan stated there were no awards given on Tuesday at the Boscawen Old Home Day volunteer recognition because there were no recommendations. However, on Thursday there was a very nice gathering of about 20 people at the Boscawen Community Garden including several of Josh Marshall's family, a selectmen and several gardeners as well as friends to honor of Ken Marshall. Josh Marshall read a very nice piece he had written about Ken and presented the plaque to family members. People shared 'Ken stories'. It was a very 'personal' event. Everyone there liked the large stone that was placed in Ken's honor.

Chair Keegan asked the Board Members if they received the email regarding the lettering to be sandblasted on the Community Garden stone. All agreed the 4 inch letters all in capital letters would be best with black lettering. The end result would read: Ken Marshall Memorial Garden and 2018 written under and centered. The quote from Perry Bros. Monuments was \$730.00.

Motion made by John Porter and seconded by Tina Larochelle to vote on the Ken Marshall Memorial for \$730.00. All in favor, none opposed.

Tina Larochelle mentioned she would like to see her late husband, David, who passed away this year, be remembered for his positive contributions to the town. Mr. Larochelle farmed in Boscawen for 41 years. He beautified the town; worked educating children about agriculture in general but orchards and apple growing in particular. He did this in talks at schools, at 4H meetings and visits to his orchards. Commissioners asked Tina to write something in more detail chronicling David's contributions so the Commission can proceed with a better understanding of David's impact.

Chair Keegan reminded Commissioners that at our last meeting we discussed the idea of an annual recognition of volunteers and townspeople who make outstanding contributions to the town. He has spoken to BCC Chair Tom Gilmore who supports the idea of a joint project. Chair Keegan asked if a Commissioner would like to take leadership for this project. Mr. Larochelle service recognition could be part of a future Boscawen Old Home Day's recognition ceremony.

Community Garden:

Chair Keegan received a letter from Jeff Abbe who reported there was very high use of the Community Garden this year. There is a continuing challenge of finding people to volunteer to help with tasks such as mowing and weed whacking to keep the garden in good shape. Chair Keegan suggested maybe if there was some recognition, more people would help. Mr. Abbe noted the irrigation system continues to perform very well for the garden. Maintaining the ground with the help of Mr. Hollins and his crew continues to work well. The area where they thought they killed the Japanese Knotweed is still a problem. Mr. Towle will be asked to spray it again. Mr. Abbe is asking if anyone has a broad fork tool for use at the garden. Mr. Porter has offered to donate one to the Community garden. Mr. Abbe will need a map of the Community Garden plots.

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We will send current gardeners a letter asking if they are interested in retaining the same plot(s) in 2019. Chair Keegan stated Mr. Abbe and Frank Laro are the two principle volunteers overseeing the garden. They do a great job.

Mr. Hardy briefly revisited the Bode Fund to explain how the town can accept such gifts. The money will be placed in a trust created by a vote at town meeting and the funds will be available to use at the community garden.

Chair Keegan mentioned that four years ago the Commission received a grant to study the feasibility of a community kitchen in Boscawen or another nearby town. The consultant hired for the economic study determined it was not feasible in Boscawen, but a possibility in the Warner-Bradford area. Some of the folks who were part of that discussion now have an operation going in Bradford where they are buying, selling and producing vegetables. It is called Sweet Beet Market and is located at 11 West Main Street in Bradford. They offer meat, dairy, eggs, baked goods and a variety of other artisan goods from growers and producers within a 30 mile radius. The store location has expanded and has added a café, bakery and a commercial kitchen opening this summer. Might be an interesting visit.

The next meeting of the Commission will be held on Thursday, October 11, 2018.

Motion to adjourn made by Ms. Larochelle and seconded by Mr. Colby. All in favor, none opposed.

The meeting adjourned at 8:20 pm.

Minutes respectfully submitted by Linda Chandonnet