

# **Agricultural Commission**

## Meeting Minutes for 27 September 2023

Chairman Mark Stevens observed there was a quorum present and called the meeting to order at 7:01 p.m. Regular members present: Ben Davis, Daimon Meeh, Mark Stevens, Jill McCullough, Eric Glines and Craig Pullen. Alternate member Corrine Pullen also present. Absent and excused was Josh Marshall. Chairman Stevens made introductions of newly appointed members and verified appointment terms as some new members are filling out the term of a former member and did not receive a full 3-year appointment.

### **Approval of Minutes:**

First order of business was the approval of the minutes of the 6 June public meeting. Motion was made by Jill McCullough to approve the minutes as presented and seconded by Ben Davis. After a brief discussion Chairman Stevens called for a vote and the motion passed unanimously.

### **Farmers market:**

Jill McCullough, liaison with the Farmer's Market gave a brief report mentioning items including;

- Ruth Smith asked Jill to mention Mary Ellen's Basket. Vendors can donate to Mary Ellen's Basket at the farmers market once per month or items are purchased by the Canterbury Farmers Market to add to the basket. That basket is then given to a family in need.
- 3 markets this season had over 200 people attending. This is the 17th year of the market here in the town center.
- UNH has conducted a survey which indicated that people are starting to wonder if farmers markets are still an efficient way of selling/distributing food, but the Canterbury Market is a bit different because of the commitment of vendors and market volunteers.

### **Update from the Chair**

- Mark reported that he has attended a number of town meetings as the Chair representing the Ag Comm. Most of these meetings were related to the on-going project of updating of the town's Master Plan.
  - Common topics included; work force housing, on-farm housing for seasonal labor, Class VI roads, and groundwater aquifer protection ordinance
- Oct 10th, Nov 14th and Dec 12th there are scheduled public hearings for input to the proposed master plan.
- Conservation Commission had proposed converting Class VI roads to trails to increase the amount of large unfragmented blocks of forest land. Mark's suggestion was to change it to evaluate Class VI roads to see if they were suitable for conversion to a trail or not. He also followed up with Greg Meeh, Chair of the Planning Board and they discussed the evaluation should include options to convert to Class V, if appropriate, or continue as Class VI, in addition to consideration for conversion Class A trail.
  - Mark asked the opinion of the Agricultural Commission to see if there is a desire to provide a recommendation regarding how these roads should be evaluated. Members noted that many farms in town have the change from Class V to Class VI occur right in the farm dooryard.
  - Members indicated a concern about the loss of value in their land that might occur should a Class VI Road be changed to a Class A trail.
  - Members raised a number of questions or concerns including.

- What process and criteria would be utilized for converting from a Class VI Road to a Class A trail?
  - Who would be responsible for making this decision?
  - What are the restrictions of a class A trail for both users and abutters?
  - Who would be responsible for maintaining these trails?
  - What limitations would the abutting farmer incur in accessing hayfields or woodlots with farm equipment or skidders via these trails?
  - Would the landowners/abutters have an opportunity to provide input during the evaluation process.
- **Seasonal Farm worker temporary housing**
    - Mark reported that Planning Board Chair, Greg Meeh, asked if the Ag Comm would be supportive of a revision to the zoning ordinance that would in some manner permit bunkhouse type living accommodations for seasonal farm labor. Greg Meeh asked if the Ag Comm could provide some proposed language they would like considered for revised ordinance
- **Accessory Dwelling Unit**
    - Mark reported that he had had a meeting with Greg Meeh discussing the ordinances permitting ADU's on farms. Greg inquiring if the Ag Comm felt the ordinance should be revised and in what manner?
    - Discussion included that ADU's originally started as in-law appts, then changed to a detached unit, then became permissible for an on-farm ADU with a 1000 sq ft size limit, which is small.
    - Should we support up to 2 ADUs on farms over a certain size?
    - What zones are allowed to have ADUs? What does it take to qualify for this?
    - Eric had some experience with this on their farm and they recently were able to get a ZBA variance on the maximum allowable distance from the main dwelling and another on the 1,000 square foot size restriction.
    - The Ag Commission was supportive but would like to have more discussion on the answers to some of these questions.
- Groundwater aquifer protection
    - Parts of it have been revised. The requirement to have secondary containment when refueling tractors is no longer a requirement.
- Discussion about ways to encourage development that doesn't fragment the farmland but there was no conclusion or formal recommendation.
  - Jill read the Ag Comm mission statement and the members felt it was good as written and does not need to be revisited.
  - Jill will send around the bylaws and discussion will be added to the agenda of the next meeting, regarding whether these need updating or revision.
  - Schedule of church newsletter articles. Mark will do one about all the new members.

There being no Old Business or New Business, a tentative date of December 6<sup>th</sup> was set for the next meeting, and upon motion by Craig Pullen, seconded by Ben Davis, the meeting adjourned at 8:37 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Daimon Meeh, Secretary