

# ***Holliston Agricultural Commission***

## ***Meeting Minutes***

June 22, 2016

### **Call to order**

Helen MacArthur called to order the regular meeting of the Holliston Agricultural Commission at 7:04 on June 22, 2016 at Holliston Town Hall, Room 014.

### **Roll call**

Justin Brown conducted a roll call. The following persons were present: Helen MacArthur, Justin Brown, Natalie Kent, and Patrick Kilkelly. Tyla Doolin was absent. Interested parties included Charlie Roberts.

### **Approval of minutes from last meeting**

The minutes from the last meeting were reviewed by group. The minutes were approved as read, passed unanimously.

### **Public Comment**

Charlie Roberts introduced himself to the group and expressed his interest in joining the AgCom. Charlie owns and operates a small farm in town producing maple syrup, fruit trees, and honey.

### **Old Business**

Recap of presentation to Board of Selectman: Justin Brown explained to the group that he and Helen MacArthur presented to the Board of Selectman at their regularly scheduled meeting on Wednesday, June 15, 2016. What was presented was a document outlining the immediate needs of the AgCom as well as an outline that could become a strategic plan for the upcoming year and beyond. Justin asked that the group consider talking about these items tonight and although may not be able to complete the task, at least start working towards having objectives and goals for the year. Justin suggested that each task that the group works on in a year has its own work plan which lays out timelines, needs, and where relevant anticipated growth in a month, 6 months, a year, etc. as a means of measurable accountability. Much like many other groups or departments in town that have either a project based or annual plan to work off of, this group should be doing the same thing. By having this document to follow, we can also share this information with the Board of Selectman, the public, other boards, etc. as well as potential volunteers looking to join the group, they know what it is the group is focusing on. He went on to say that included in this plan would also be a calendar of annual events and benchmark dates to work off of in order to be prepared for them such as when to start working on the spring event, what the deadlines for that press release would be, etc. Some other goals for the year should be revamping the website, including surveys and forms whereby farmers can sign up and be included in discussions and events relative to agriculture. We need to

let the community know that this group is here to help them with issues or answer questions.

Charlie Roberts responded that he believes what is also important is educating and working closely with other town departments and groups. He agrees that by having clear plans, it will educate the other groups but also inspire confidence in the AgCom and therefore foster a working relationship for issues.

Patrick Kilkelly asked where the bylaws are governing agriculture in town (available online and Justin will forward to the group) and stated that this group should be familiar with bylaws governing agriculture. The fear is that a large developer can easily take advantage of situations that are not well-represented by this group.

Justin agreed saying also that to build on Charlie's point that we need to have strong working relationships with town groups and departments ahead of time, which is #4 on the strategic plan list. Justin's proposal is to have a liaison from the group to each other group and department in town, charged with attending at least 2 meetings per year of the other group and being the contact person for any issues from that group. In the immediate future, once liaisons are assigned and strategic plan is completed, attend the next meeting and briefly present the document to each group including the Board of Selectman which allows for the townspeople to hear as well through HCATV and therefor will know what this group is working on and know they can reach out for help when needed.

Helen MacArthur asked about the email forwarded to the group by former Chairman Tony Lulek if the email included an agricultural commission newsletter from the state. Why hadn't we received this in the past?

Patrick Kilkelly asked whether there was regional agricultural commission groups as referenced by the newsletter. This is something the group will look into.

Justin Brown mentioned that this is an area that the website can improve as far exchanging information but noted that should we change the website provider, there would be a change in the current email distribution and it would also cost money.

Patrick Kilkelly said we should invest the money in the website because it should become the heart of our group and how we are represented.

Community Garden: Natalie Kent provided an update. An idea was floated last year to have an end-of-year event. Justin asked what % of people re-new each year. Natalie reported the renewal rate was 100% plus adding 2 additional this year. Helen asked which plots were full of weeds, Natalie reported 2 plots had not begun working on them and she will reach out to them. Justin asked if Natalie could write a work plan for the community garden, including pertinent planning dates. Helen mentioned the weather dictates the dates, but it doesn't have to be a hard date, just a planning date.

PJ Kilkelly stated when the new community farm created garden plots for rent, it was never the intention to compete with the AgCom community garden.

The decision was made to convert the current butterfly plot to a regular plot.

### **New Business:**

Butterfly Aviary: PJ Kilkelly reported that he has already started working on it and the opening day will be Saturday, July 9<sup>th</sup>. Holliston in Bloom has donated \$500 for

flowers and supplies and that will be used at Cavicchio Farm where Holliston in Bloom has an account. Cherry Fenton from Holliston in Bloom, Helen, and PJ worked on planting new plants. Justin asked if these supplies will last the year or if there will be future costs this year. PJ said there is currently just over \$200 in credit left at Cavicchio and we have roughly \$1500 remaining in account set aside for the butterfly aviary, of that \$500 needs to be spent on butterfly kits right away. Justin asked if PJ could write an annual budget for the contract. PJ replied a rough annual operating cost is estimated at \$3500. PJ said it's kind of hard to do at this point because we haven't had a full year yet, it also depends on infrastructure such as the netting. PJ would also like to add more to the porch entrance, including shelving for free book exchange. PJ would like the butterfly aviary to be a tool for education, getting children involved to hatch kits. Justin asked if PJ would be willing to attend a school committee meeting early in school year to ask for their involvement. PJ brought the idea of working with Mission Springs and the senior center to build needed recreational opportunities. Projects that are needed in town and possibly easily executed by the group.

Justin asked that any and all ideas from the group be brought to the table, discussed and prioritized in order to be included in strategic plan.

PJ stated that there should not be an issue with funding in the future ó many groups in town have expressed a desire to donate funds in the future, but we have missed the deadlines for this year. An idea for this year would be to display a sign for groups that donate this year at the aviary.

Natalie mentioned that we owe the Lion's club a spot if that's the case. Helen confirmed that they had donated \$1,000 in 2015. Justin asked that the group be sure to send a thank you to any one or group who donates. Former member Paula is believed to have thank you cards.

PJ stressed that the group needs to remain active at events during the year. By attending and being active, the towns people including other groups see us and know we are working hard.

Natalie mentioned we need more people in the group, which all agreed. Justin replied the Board of Selectman are going to advertise the openings, but also that by having a strategic plan to present to interested parties, they will know what we do. The discussion about who to recommend for the positions lead to the thought that there should be some sort of questionnaire so that we can learn about applicants. Natalie felt that she doesn't fit the "farmer" profile, but the group thought that we certainly need interested parties, not just farmers. The hope is to generate some interest and hopefully have enough people showing interest that we would need to have time to learn about each.

PJ mentioned that everyone from the public should be welcome and feel welcome at meetings.

Justin asked that members of this group have a seat at the meeting table before members of the public take a seat at the table.

PJ asked about materials for butterfly aviary. Helen stated we have roughly \$1,500. Justin made a motion, seconded by Helen to task PJ with managing the butterfly aviary much like Natalie manages the community garden and allow him to create a budget for 2017 to present to the group but for this year to have access to the \$1500 to

spend as he sees fit and report to the group at monthly meetings. Motion passed unanimously.

Helen asked if there will be an opening party ó July 9<sup>th</sup> is the opening day with some hot dogs.

PJ is going to add a guest book to the opening of the butterfly aviary.

PJ had replaced water faucets at community garden - \$30

PJ still has not been paid for soil samples from last year. He wishes to have that money to go towards butterfly aviary. Helen will check with Town Manager as far as process ó that money was thought to have come from Community Preservation or ConCom but not AgCom so we need to get money from whoever was supposed to pay for it.

Board Structure: Justin made a motion to recommend to the Board of Selectman that Charlie Roberts join the AgCom. Motion passed unanimously. Discussion around the remaining positions needed, Natalie still does not wish to move up to an open position. Justin made a motion to have PJ as Chairman, Justin as Vice-Chairman, Helen as Secretary, Charlie as Secretary, Natalie as Associate Member ó motion passed unanimously.

Adjournment

Helen MacArthur adjourned the meeting at 9:34 pm.

Respectfully submitted by: Justin Brown