

HOLLISTON AGRICULTURAL COMMISSION *MINUTES*

Location: Room 201 (Kitchen; upstairs and to the left)

Date: 21 June 2018 THURSDAY

Time: 7pm

Facilitator: PJ Kilkelly

Agenda Items

1. PJ opened the meeting at 7:05pm
2. Present: PJ Kilkelly, Grace Kilkelly, Carrie Marsh, Cherie Hafford
Absent: Jocelyn Tremblay, Charlie Roberts
3. Minutes of the 16 May 2018 Meeting Jocelyn (none submitted)
4. Pubic Comment None
5. Open Issues
 - a. Treasurer's Report Jocelyn (none submitted)
 - b. Open Board Positions No candidates at meeting
 - c. Farmers Market: Guests Al Jesness, Martha Whyte, Wayne Stolle

The committee welcomed three representatives from Christ the King Lutheran Church (600 Central St, Holliston). Martha Whyte began by sharing that historically, their church has been "more than just church. 100 years ago, we were an integral part of the community. We're exploring how we do that today." She went on to say they want to be good stewards of their resources, mentioned they were proud of the solar panels installed on the church, and that they want to promote the community's use of their resources. They saw an article about AgCom and Wayne contacted PJ with one of their ideas: a Farmers Market. It helps people in community, they have the space, the parking (110 parking spots), and it would allow them to integrate more with the community.

Martha looked at the existing markets: Medway VFW, Natick, and Ashland. "We don't want to compete, just offer something closer." They have already contacted Board of Health and zoning (the church is residential; they would need to get a variance from the Zoning Board). The church board meets next week, and asked what help/advice the AgCom might offer for them to take back to the meeting; they "would like the AgCom's blessing" and help connecting with farmers if they decide to pursue this idea.

PJ: Get on the Zoning Board's agenda and begin preparation. Holliston tried a few years ago to have a Farmers Market near Blair Square (Exchange/Union streets). Also tried at the Auction Marketplace (Washington St, across from Whitney).

It's almost important to come out really strong at the start. If not there's not enough produce at beginning, important momentum is lost. The participating farmers would need to be lined up and confirmed; the commercial farmers are already attending other FMs.

MacArthur's is doing 5 FMs every week. For them to branch out and take on additional stations would require another truck, at least another person to man the table. And the farmers want to make money the first year because profit margins are slim. It must be worth their while right off.

Carrie: It's too late for this year: farmers have to have a plan in place a year ahead (know what to grow for the coming year). Her friend at Upswing farm said there isn't even any extra produce this year due to weather conditions. An advocate of FMs: goes to the Ashland location every week. They have a theme each week: herb, strawberry... It's also a very social event. This, Carrie feels, is where it would fit for Holliston. Ashland follows an 80/20 rule: 80% of the product sold is locally produced.

Martha notes her research found a MA requirement for the produce to be local. Small percentage can be "secondary" (purchased from another source and resold). PJ said there are some issues now in Boston where sellers are buying off docks in Boston and taking the produce to FMs. Some Boards overseeing these FMs are not enforcing the rules. "A few strong farmers take over and make their own rules." Everyone wants to keep the status quo, so turning a blind eye.

Wayne wondered how many farmers would be needed to ensure a strong start. Carrie says variety is most important. Arcadia focuses on lettuce, tomato, cucumbers but they take "exotic" selections to Ashland and sell out! "People who come to FMs aren't the same people who go to the stores." Carrie says to contact the farmers directly and talk to them.

Carrie suggested testing the waters by having a popup market. This would introduce the idea and potentially generate the needed following for the coming year. They asked if the AgCom is in touch with every person who has a farm in town; "Does this mean we have to call every farmer and see what their marketing plan is?" PJ repeated what Carrie had said: it's too late for this year, but it would be good to plan for next spring. There is time to develop the necessary relationships with local farms and create a plan. This will make for a strong start with enough participants and produce. "What is 'strong'? 5 vendors? 10, 20?" Carrie thinks 20—and ready-to-eat options. Breads, sandwiches, crepes, meats, etc. "Look at it as an event." Carrie also mentioned she would be interested in participating next year if they go forward with the idea.

Some farmers use greenhouses and sell microgreens during the winter. Ashland and Natick both have an "indoor" element. Natick has in door.

PJ gave the guests a printout of the MA GOV download about how to run a farmer's market.

Al asked if Waterfresh in Hopkinton participates in any farmers market? AgCom doesn't know, but Carrie says they are hydroponic.

Martha then said she had reached out to a couple of farmers markets—the people who organize them expressed an interest in joining the effort, but PJ said someone going to Needham for years will not relinquish that spot in favor of a new start-up FM. Martha

says they don't want to compete with established Markets—want to provide LOCAL vendors with another place/time in addition to what they may already be doing.

Next topic was ideal day: Thur, Fri, Sat, and Sun afternoon (in Hopkinton) are already FM days. Tuesday afternoon, maybe?

PJ brought up insurance. Vendors and the locale both need to have required insurance policies. Martha said they had already talked to their insurance company.

PJ asked about the church about manpower—"there's lots of legwork to be done." Martha said that in addition to the 3 attending this meeting there were 4 more on this church Board. They determined they would start with farms in Holliston, does AgCom have a list of those? PJ said he would forward the list to Martha.

Would the church be interested in participating in Farm Day in Sept? Typically 10 or 12 farms there (MacArthurs, Arcadia, Upswing, Campersol). Carrie says there is more than produce: honey, syrup, and others (just need to make sure the smaller participants have the insurance needed). Grace said there are opportunities beyond produce that others could be interested in: demonstrations, short presentations. Could also invite nurseries (and farmers) to sell seedlings. PJ said the church could be included in the advertising brochure. The guests said no, they are already committed to the Nation wide Lutheran event ("God's work. Our hands" Sep 9). This is for the Holliston church; an "exterior" group that volunteers for Rail Trail. Cleanup from 10 to 4 (2nd Sunday of Sept). However, there is also an "interior" group who may be interested in working Farm Day...They will talk to the Community Outreach Board.

The guests will meet with the rest of their team to discuss and determine whether to participate in Farmers Day.

The pop-up market is also a possibility. Could go for the middle of summer; PJ cautions, "just make sure to promote the daylight out of it." Carrie said to consider the fall: apples, pumpkins, firewood— the church could focus on their commitment to sustainability (solar panels) and local community. "Ask your solar panel vendor if they would be willing to sponsor your kickoff. They could have booth at your event."

This sparked Grace's observation that for school Ag expo there are different sponsors and their names are printed on the back of the t-shirts that are sold. Sponsors give certain amount of money that goes towards Future Farmers Market. Sponsors could also donate goods instead of money. Grace particularly liked canines at Ag Expo, demonstrating how puppies are trained. There is agility training. Maybe Happy Retriever interested...? Almost any community-based activity of interest, even though not as directly related to farmers and produce. Demonstrations and talks that attendees would find interesting: Carrie said at one FM there was a wool focus (pen of sheep, processing wool, selling yarn).

FM and children: at Ashland FM there is a small area for children to play (they have a preschool playground). All agreed this is very important.

PJ closed with encouraging them to put in an application for zoning variance. There was some talk about the cost of the application, and general agreement that any fees would likely be waived if requested. PJ offered to have one or two of the AgCom sit in on any of the church meetings during discussion of the FM topic.

The church is a nonprofit is 501C3. Whatever funds are raised go back to church.

d. Eat Local

Carrie

Before we launched the “eat local” on FB we had 211 following AgCom; now we have 245. *This segued to the website:*

e. Website

All

Carrie repeated the AgCom’s desire to promote “eat local” and said we need a drip marketing campaign to this. “We need to consistently reinforce why this is important. My original post was about strawberries. They don’t ripen after picking so better to eat local. And there was an e-coli scare last year on lettuce.”

How are the farmers participating in this AgCom effort? Many have their own FB pages. Carrie says she can repost what they’re posting (she says Arcadian corn is great!) Carrie agreed to keep highlighting what the farms are selling.

PJ would like to see the commercial farms on the AgCom website, and a regional map of all the farms. Justin Brown used to be the one working on the website until he moved away. Charlie and Jocelyn have been doing some of the work, but they don’t have time and the website needs more work. (Site is not part of the Town’s online presence). PJ said he invited Matt from Pitbull who helped do the community farm. He charged \$300; was willing to show an AgCom member how to do it.

Cherie offered to put together a proposal for overhauling the website IF the AgCom members agreed to provide considerable input on what each wished would be included.

PJ moved to have Cherie present the committee with a revised website proposal; Carrie seconded. All voted yes, motion passed.

Cherie agreed to send a separate email to all committee members asking for their input. Responses to be discussed at next meeting.

f. Butterfly Aviary.

PJ

Planted, and opening on July 4th. Cherry Fenton from Holliston in Bloom donated time weeding and transplanting, as did a Girl Scout group. PJ asked Cherry for information that would allow AgCom to thank the group, but nothing yet received. Carrie offered to donate some of her lavender seedlings.

PJ reported receiving donation checks from the Garden Club (\$1,100) and from Newcomers (\$608.99)

America in Bloom will be visiting the butterfly aviary 19, 20 July. Grace asked about scheduling another butterfly release on one of the days judges will be there (12 Monarchs).

g. Community Garden.

PJ

PJ reported \$325 in checks from plot rentals. All plots are rented. PJ notes people are slow to plant due to the cold spring weather.

Within the next few days, PJ will hand off to Jocelyn a total of \$2,033.99.

A renter has complained to PJ about the weeds and fence in disrepair: Tad, a long-time renter of two plots when garden plots first opened, has not done anything yet this year. PJ contacted him and he said he's pressed for time. However, his kids will be out of school soon and the sports seasons are winding down, so he will have more free time. PJ is going to follow up and let him know that the two plots need to receive care no later than July 8. If not, the AgCom will need to take action so the plots are presentable by the time the judges arrive.

PJ reports several timbers need replacing in the fall (due to rot). He gets them fairly inexpensively from the sawmill: need 8 or 10 timbers for about \$200.

h. Library Chicks

PJ

Chicks hatched at the library--huge success! Lots of interested people. Library wants to do it again: a midsummer quail hatching is in the works. There is also interest from the senior center to "host a hatching." PJ is going to coordinate with them on the details.

Mid summer hatch of quail at the library. No dates picked yet.

6. PJ New Business

Rail Trail 4th of July event and Eat Local campaign. Cherie provided more detail about the celebration being an opportunity for local agriculturists to have a presence on Woodland street during the two events. There will be a vendor selling ice cream, the Friends of Holliston Rail Trail selling items, and possibly 1 or 2 others. If anyone on the AgCom knows someone who would be interested, have him or her email Cherie.

Farm to Table in August – PJ said there was so much damage after winter that the greenhouse couldn't be installed until a couple of weeks ago.

Carrie asked about the Community Farm and how the AgCom intersect. PJ is the liaison. The property is "two years away from being able to grow anything worthwhile." PJ wants the AgCom to be involved with this, and mentioned a collaborative possibility with a teacher who would teach agricultural-related topics using the farm. The School Superintendent is encouraging this, as there is a growing student interest in local agriculture and each year, the district is losing students to Norfolk Aggie.

Grace asked about clubs for high school and/or middle school. There was conversation about a club related to sustainability, about clubs taking field trips to the butterfly aviary and other places to learn about the various agricultural interests open to students. Grace confirmed this was a major reason she chose to attend: to discover what she didn't know existed. "Our clubs are on a rotational basis during school hours, but maybe Holliston could meet every week on a different day with different topics. Students could choose which to attend."

Bullard Farm letter. They reached out to AgCom, wanting advice on how to better farm their lands. Would like to meet with AgCom. PJ will respond with an invitation to attend the next AgCom meeting in July. Brief discussion wondering about the "deal the town worked out with Bullard years ago."

Secretary. Cherie agreed to be AgCom secretary.

7. Next Meeting Date

Committee members agreed the AgCom meetings will be the second Tuesday of each month. **Next meeting is July 10.** August meeting is the 14, September meeting is the 11th, October is 9th, November is 13th, and December is 11th.

8. Adjournment 9:01pm

Action Items	Owner(s)	Deadline
Send to Martha the list of Holliston farmers	PJ	TBD
Give checks to Jocelyn	PJ	TBD
Email committee with details re: submitting website suggestions	Cherie	26 Jun
Follow up with the Senior Center re: hosting a hatching	PJ	?
Follow up with Bullard Farm's request for a meeting	PJ	?
Follow up with Tad/Community Garden plots	PJ	?
Email AgCom members when aviary opening is set	PJ	TBD