

Holliston Agricultural Commission

MINUTES

09 Nov 2021

- **Call to order 7:07**
- **Roll call** Evan, Carrie, Claire, Vicky, Cherie (Andy; not yet sworn in)
- **Approve minutes** September AgCom Minutes approved
- **Treasurer:** Carrie reported current balance is \$5,671.08
- **Public Comment** None

OLD Business

1. Community Garden. Hand-off and income from 2020-2021 Carrie met with Town Administrator and handed off all material, including applications, plot plan, and the names of those registered. TA will work to create a town entity to take over this activity.

New town-appointed entity will need the money from plot fees paid (currently in the AgCom account) to get established. AgCom moved, seconded and voted to transfer the \$2610 to the new entity once it is established.

2. Draft letter introducing AgCom to new businesses was approved; Carrie will send a copy to the new Concord street farm and the 7 hemp growers in Holliston.

Signage: A banner across WA Street? We have an application. Evan says he can do a seasonal sign, "Right to Farm Town." AgCom agreed to start with one banner with the focus on Farms Day. Do this quickly because it's close to the celebrate Holliston and should be up a week before the Farms Day event. Claire and Cherie volunteered to help design banner.

Directional signs. Carrie met with Travis and most signs are on route 16. If a sign is taken down, current restrictions/rules may not allow it to be reinstalled. Carrie will continue to explore what can be done so no signs are lost, just signage improved.

Discussion about proactively promoting agricultural businesses vs. other industries. There is an AgCom commission responsible for focusing on the needs of agricultural endeavors, and other commissions to promote Holliston's economic growth.

Criteria for a farm's business to be listed on sign/s was discussed, as well as the purpose of directional signage (identify location of farm). Andy noted app for state agriculture signs, and that route 16 is not a rural secondary highway. This is being appealed with the help of dept. of agriculture. Also discussed: potential of putting way-finding signs on town-owned property (126 and 16 at island).

AgCom agreed a possible place to start is supporting larger businesses that can apply directly, and smaller businesses grouped on signage erected on town-owned property.

Evan and Carrie will work on directional signs.

NEW Business

1. Chair's goal moving forward. Sees the Chair position as a revolving one. Will serve for 1 year in this role and expects all AgCom members to take turns chairing. This keeps the AgCom fresh, timely, and balanced in focus.
2. Claire moved that Evan be elected as new Treasurer. Unanimous approval.
3. American Recovery Protection Act (ARPA) Arco's role in community The CARES act began with pandemic: money was given to town to purchase PPE for schools, sanitation, cleaning supplies. Next phase of recovery is ARPA. Government is putting money towards counties, but MA as MA does not have county structure money goes directly to individual towns over the next 3 to 5 years to help businesses recover from pandemic. Town Administrator has pointed out that towns do not cut any checks for this, there will be a third party fiduciary to administer funds. AgCom to advocate for and educate farms about this?

Carrie reached out to state Ag Com to ask what other Agcoms are doing.

Andy shared that usually the chambers of commerce or business associations are involved as advocates, but Holliston has neither. Andy wonders if possibly the AgCom can request funding on behalf of farms? Community can go directly to the ARPA steering committee as did the Rail Trail and Historical committees. AgCom possibly request 20,000? Andy says 4.4 million being given to Holliston for schools, public health, and facility. He would like the AgCom to "establish a project that is about agriculture so we can request funding from ARPA." Andy volunteered to do all necessary application efforts, and by the next AgCom meeting will develop a plan.

Carrie agreed to reach out to Vicky. Claire suggested funding help for future retail needs such as online-- startup websites and online retail. USDA MA (marketing service) has grant opportunities to help small businesses recover.

Suggestion was made to address the pre- and post-pandemic change in consumers buying patterns.

4. Farms Day 2022. Date, website and create Facebook event **Sept 11**. Celebrate Holliston is scheduled for Sept 17, and Harvest is 18. AgComm agreed it's time to begin promoting; Carrie will add "save the date" on Facebook and Cherie will update the website.
5. Update AgCom website. Remove community garden and butterfly house references; update group email, update list of farms (remove Upswing, October Farm, Kokpelli Farm). Wait for Carrie to confirm with some that they are farms that should be included.
6. Update town website. Add new members.
7. Virtual holiday advertisement. Facebook slide show highlighting farms for the holidays Facebook cycles through all businesses in town. Instagram and Facebook for small business Saturday? Buy local, support Holliston AgCom, show products available locally. Something on Holliston Reporter? Interested farms can contact AgCom.
8. FIRST NIGHT. In the past AgCom has erected a tent along the trail. AgCom agreed to maintain focus on promoting for the holidays; Claire will lead this. Carrie will call/email all the primary farms. Their logo and the product they are showcasing for small business Saturday can be included. Carrie will contact by tomorrow; Claire wants everything no later than a week from Thursday. Ready by that weekend. Carrie will make Claire an admin on the FB page.

9. What events should AgCom have a presence in 2022? Last meeting we discussed:

- a. Is it Spring Yet
- b. Farm Day
- c. Celebrate Holliston
- d. Holiday Stroll
- e. First Night

Next Meeting Date December 14

Move to adjourn 8:29 pm

TBD agenda items

George Fiske and sharing mutual Sherborn/Holliston AgCom interests

Appointments, Claire Toomey, full member AgCom term expires June 2024 Vicky Keller, Associate member AgCom, and Andy Reseska, Associate member of the AgCom. Term expires June 2022