

**Agricultural Commission
November 20, 2007**



Meeting in room 104, 2 Jabish St., Lawrence Memorial Hall

Members: G. Adzima, J. Clements, J. Gillan, W. Shattuck

Associate Members: S. Gay, A. Page

Absent Members: H. Guardenier, R. Reidy

Visitors: Tom and Barbara Hastings

The meeting was called to order at 7:05 pm.

Minutes: Motion by J. Clements to accept the August 21, 2007 minutes, Second G. Adzima, Vote 3-0.

Discussed the Community Plan (Comm. Plan), also known as the Master Plan. J. Clements and J. Gillan are also members of the Community Plan Steering Committee. They attended the forum last week, and S. Gay attended as well.

J. Clements gave an overview of what came out of the forum. Noted the Comm. Plan was accepted by the Town of Belchertown five years ago at a town meeting and is being updated. The plan guides the development of the Town of Belchertown. It was a small turnout, but a good session. The facilitator of the forum identified priorities for the update to the Comm. Plan. The changes to a town, the safety, natural resources, infrastructure, were some items that were discussed.

Noted that the Community Plan Steering Comm. placed survey forms in the town hall, and on the town website. All the citizens in town are encouraged to fill out the survey, and hand them in to the Town Planner, D. Albertson at the town hall. The updates should be complete by this Summer 2008.

Meeting agenda items:

Century Farms - J. Gillan will speak with D. Dickinson about Century Farms and if she would be interested in doing some research on the different types of farms that have been or were in town for the past century.

Certified kitchen use, what does it take to use the Mason Building on the corner? Mason and Town Clerk Bill Barnett said use of this kitchen would require a certified person be present. The AgComm will let farmers know this kitchen will be available for their use for canning goods, etc., and should be available to farmers by Spring 2008.

Community Preservation Act Applications: applications need to be presented to the Community Preservation Committee, who oversee the use of these funds by the end of January 2008. The farmer gathering in January may produce an interest in some type of funding, which is made available through the Community Preservation Funds.

Noted marketing the Summertime Farmers Market, which is held weekly, may be an idea to pursue for funding from CPA funds. G. Adzima will ask one of the members of the CPA.

Another thought is to get an inventory of agriculture in Belchertown, and what type of agriculture is going on in town at this time. Also, on the same thought – we might consider hiring someone to do the census of agriculture in town?

Farmers Gathering - The AgComm will hold their second annual farmers get together in the Lawrence Memorial Auditorium January 19, 2008, at 4 pm. An announcement will be sent to farmers known to the AgComm, and a public announcement placed in *The Sentinel*.

Page 2. Agricultural Commission meeting November 20, 2007

Farmer Map: since the map was handed out, various functions, there are some additional farms that wish to be a part of the map. A small article may be placed in *The Sentinel* asking for input from the public and the map will need updating after giving farmers a chance to respond.

Farmers Market : cooking and canning demonstration? Will see Gail Grammarosa, who runs the market, about a possibility of a cooking display or a talk on food safety.

Historic Commission – Farm Day. The Historic Comm. mentioned sponsoring a “farm day”, or farm tours. G. Adzima will ask T. Stockton if the Historic Commission would be interested in this, and if they would like to discuss this. G. Adzima knows that the Austin Farm has tours of their farm.

Horseman’s Council – perhaps the AgComm would be interested in having a council. It will be placed on the February 2008 agenda. A lecture could be presented on horse care in different seasons in New England and area riding trails could be developed for sharing.

Lecture series will be requested by the AgComm, perhaps for March 2008. W. Shattuck will ask if the National Resource Conservation Service would be interested in a lecture series. Alan Page, a member of the AgComm, may be interested in holding a lecture. A. Page recently attended two-day seminar in New Hampshire, for models for forest decision making. He will make up a list of topics to cover for a lecture on forestry.

Another fine lecture about the changes to the Chapter 61 laws (changes March 2007) was given by Nathan L’Etoil, who is a Director at the Farm Bureau. Perhaps he would be interested in giving a lecture on new conservation laws.

Tractor and small engine show - The AgComm will sponsor the tractor and small engine show held for one weekend in the summer on the town common once again this year.

Website for the Agricultural Committee: G. Adzima noted that she received a call from L. Leduc from the Palmer planning office. L. Leduc said she went on the website and could not find the “right to farming” bylaw. G. Adzima asked if anyone was interested in updating the website at this time. J. Clements will try to update the AgComm website.

Other:

Some zoning changes are being made to the Ag-A section of the Schedule of Use section of the zoning bylaw, which will help farmers pursue their farming practice.

J. Clements attended a meeting at which Richard Hubbard gave a lecture on changes to the Agricultural Protection Restriction program. G. Adzima and S. Gay will attend that same program in January 2008 and noted that the agenda is available and attendance costs \$10. for any member of the AgComm to attend.

The visitors noted they have an alpaca farm, under five acres, and are here as homeowners in town, to see what the AgComm discusses at their meetings.

A. Page noted that idle land gives the opportunity to provide temporary forage for animals. He noted to the visitors they may want to consider and contact farmers such as himself, to allow their alpaca to forage on other farmers open land. This may also be brought up at the farmers get together in January 2008.

Minutes Nov. 2007: S. Gay