

**Agricultural Commission  
December 21, 2010**



Meeting in room 104, 2 Jabish St., Lawrence Memorial Hall  
Member present: Grace Adzima, Hope Guardenier;  
Associate Members: Daniel Beaudette, Susan Gay, Matt Kotowski  
Absent Members: Judy Gillan, Alan Page, Will Shattuck

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Grace went over several dates for upcoming gatherings:

January 18, 2011 is the date for the next AgComm meeting;  
January 22, 2011 is the date for the AgComm annual farmer gathering;  
January 24, 2011 is a tentative date for the AgComm to meet with the Board of Selectmen to discuss the "excise tax" for animals and farm machinery;  
March 5, 2011 – Peter Westover is holding a workshop in Deerfield Town Hall – no set agenda yet;  
March 19, 2011 is an estate planning workshop for landowners.

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Grace asked Sue to file the minutes of October 19 and November 16, 2010 with the Town Clerk.

Grace noted that the excise tax on animals and farm machinery for the past couple of years was around \$200,000.00, and taxes to the Town in return \$1,500.00. The year of 2010 shows the value of animals and machinery as \$480,000.00, and incoming taxes \$2,400.00.

The next step for the AgComm is to go before the Board of Selectmen and ask for support so that the farmer may be excused from additional taxes to animals and equipment. Other towns have successfully asked voters to allow an exemption for farm animals and farm equipment.

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Grace brought up having a seminar on "Estate Planning". She asked if anyone had a place to meet on this. Dan said the Belchertown Land Trust uses the high school cafeteria and that the maintenance person opens and closes the building. He said there is sufficient space, seating and parking. Also, Dan noted the audio is not the best and so requesting a microphone and overhead projector is helpful. Perhaps the Towns of Granby, Palmer and Ware may wish to come to such a seminar and we could have it on a Saturday morning, allowing more people to attend.

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Dan spoke about Joe Simcuc, who is retiring from the UMass Orchard off Sabin Street. Joe has managed that farm for around 35 years. Dan asked if the AgComm would be interested in doing something to recognize Joe's hard work and expertise to keep that farm going. He said many children have had some field exercises and classroom training because of Joe, and it is his due diligence that the farm continues as operational.

Grace said we will let the Board of Selectmen know about it, and if they choose to honor Joe we could be part of it. If they choose not to do something for Joe, we can then do it ourselves. Grace will bring it up at the farmer gathering and see if more people want to get involved in this recognition as well.

Grace will be in touch with the Board of Selectmen and let the AgComm members know if there is a date set to go to talk to the Board of Selectmen.

Hope brought up a response to the website by one of the farmers in town. She noted the website is lacking information and so she has been in contact with the Computer Director regarding this. Perhaps the town website can refer to secondary places to find out more information. The site is not that user friendly.

Adjourn 8:00 pm.  
Minutes submitted by S. Gay