

Agricultural Commission
March 16, 2010



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

Member present: Grace Adzima, Hope Guardenier, Alan Page (Judy Gillan 8:20)

Associate Members: Daniel Beaudette, Susan Gay, Matt Kotowski

Absent Members: W. Shattuck, J. Gillan, M. Austin

Minutes: Motion H. Guardenier to file June 16, 2009, December 15, 2009 minutes, and accept the November 17, 2009 minutes, Second G. Adzima, Vote 3-0.

Motion G. Adzima to accept January 19, 2010 minutes, Second H. Guardenier, Vote 3-0.

Grace handed "Welcome to Belchertown, A Right to Farm Community" paper to members. She said it could be a way for realtors to let possible land or home buyers know they may come across farm machinery on roadways, and be aware of possible noises or odors from farms.

Members discussed pros and cons for any announcement through realtors. There was a suggestion to add "forestry" to this page. Another suggestion was to state there is a Thursday Farmers Market held on the town common during summer months. The announcement could mention the town website, where the full Right to Farm Bylaw could be read.

Matt said he's a photographer and could help out with photos. Alan said he could get photocopies of the paper made.

Grace noted the Kestrel Trust met to brainstorm on how to interest farmers with regard to land protection, such as Agriculture Protection Restriction (APR) program, regulated by the State of Massachusetts. LeeAnne Connolly, Conservation Administrator said she would help with APR interests as well.

Grace handed out a map showing the few parcels in town that chose under an APR. She spoke of a person interested in this program in town at this time. She said in the town of Granby, MA, she is aware of a farmer that went through the APR process, and it opened the door for other farmers that also came forward.

Brought up parcels which would be good candidates for an APR. The old Shea farm off Cold Spring Road, is presently owned by Mrs. Fry and Mrs. Magee. Part of the parcel is rented by Duane Whitcomb. This parcel abuts a variety of open space, such as the Belchertown Sportsman Club, many acres of Quabbin land and the University of Massachusetts Orchards. It would add to a large area of contiguous protected land.

Everyone agreed education is an important element to keeping land protected, as well as being worked correctly. Another parcel brought up is a large parcel on Bay Road and Lamson Avenue, also known as "Ingate". That parcel had a large development proposed but it fell through. The Ingate parcel abuts the Holyoke Range, a large contiguous parcel of open land.

The Dudek farm on Bardwell and North Washington Streets was brought up. It is being offered for sale as a whole 170 acres, with a price tag of several millions of dollars.

Discussed what the State of Mass considers "prime farm land". It was noted that the Agriculture Protection Restriction program was restructured, and the website says it is available December 2009, but can't be accessed. It should be available in the near future.



Hope will speak to Roxanne about the Farmer Market layout and availability of spaces.

Judy Gillan came to the meeting. She mentioned the top ten priority items of the Community Plan, or sometimes called Master Plan. Grace read the top ten aloud. Judy asked what number 14 was, stating it reads "targeting parcels". She mentioned looking for agricultural soils and documenting farm parcels. A question was brought up on how the AgComm could be made aware when a farm comes up for sale.

Belchertown's 250th Anniversary will be celebrated and a committee is being formed.

The next meeting will be April 20, 2010 at 7 pm.

Adjourned at 8:35 pm.

Minutes submitted by S. Gay