

Agricultural Commission
March 18, 2008



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

Members: G. Adzima, J. Clements, J. Gillan
Associate Members: S. Gay, D. Beaudette
Absent Members: W. Shattuck, H. Guardenier, R. Reidy, A. Page
Visitor: D. Fokine (Stone Soup Farm)

Dan Fokine, is the Assistant Manager of the Stone Soup Farm, and has a lease with N.E.S.F.I. He shared information about his farm and noted his partner Jared worked for two years at Red Fire Farm in Granby, MA. They are registered as C.S.A. and they hope to sell 150 shares to Stone Soup Farm.

The AgComm welcomes Daniel Beaudette as an official Associate Member to the commission. This fills an opening for an associate member.

Meeting agenda items:

Update on the Community Plan (Comm. Plan), also known as the Master Plan. The AgComm will be added to the Comm. Plan. There was no commission when the plan was put together several years ago.

Special and Annual Town Meeting - D. Beaudette will present the Zoning Bylaw changes to the Board of Selectmen and to the town meeting. The AgComm have amendments to help farmers to use their property as farmland.

The AgComm asked everyone to attend the Annual Town Meeting. There will be a vote on passing the agricultural items for farming. The items are additions and amendments to the Zoning Bylaw Chapter 145.

Certified kitchen use, Judy Metcalf, Director, Board of Health will put a packet together. The Board of Health puts protocol in place for kitchen use. Noted that Massachusetts is conservative, and town regulations vary.

Noted fees are \$125.00 to certify a small farm, and if farmers need certifications for each town they sell their wares in, it is an economic disincentive.

Discussed ideas on how to get more information about farm sales through regulations or processing. The AgComm could invite Ann Marie Beaupre who tries to use local foods for the schools. Perhaps we can connect her with farmers.

Horseman's Gathering - G. Adzima held an educational gathering with Dr. Morcom (Mill Valley Veterinarian Clinic) on March 7, 2008. Dr. Morcom informed the 50 or so horse owners in attendance about horse maintenance. The horse owners said they'd like to see more signage for vehicles to "slow down" and would also like to see a map for riding on trails, etc.

It was noted that a gathering for the group to talk about etiquette would be helpful, as not all open fields are open to horses. Also, stable waste and disposal of deceased horses as well is an issue. There are no specific regulations, but calls are forwarded to the Board of Health.

Noted that trails are beneficial for horse owners and need to be maintained. D. Beaudette is a member of the Belchertown Land Trust and he noted that Bill Lyons, member of the snow mobile club may know of trails that may be used by horse owners. They maintains some trails in town.

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It was noted that there is some protection for landowners from liability. As long as landowners are not leaving open wells, etc., if a person uses another's land for recreation, the owner is not responsible for that other person's well being. However, some farmers do not want snow mobiles using their property for trail making. It was agreed that a website with calendars, resources and contacts for land use would be helpful to the general public.

Farmers Market : The AgComm hopes to get a link to people who will be at the farmer market and how to contact Heidi Bradway who runs the market. The link will be located at AgComm@belchertown.org. Kevin Hannon is the Computer Director for the town website.

Other:

J. Clements picked up brochures from other towns and will bring some in.

The farm map will be updated and people will be contacted to see if they want to be on the map again this year.

Minutes: March 18, 2008: S. Gay