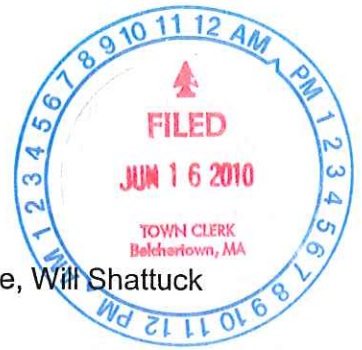


Agricultural Commission
May 18, 2010



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

Member present: Grace Adzima, Judy Gillan, Hope Guardenier, Alan Page, Will Shattuck
Associate Members: Mike Austin, Susan Gay, Matt Kotowski
Absent Members: Dan Beaudette

Alan Page noted he is present as a citizen, as he wishes to discuss a personal issue, and not in the capacity of an Agricultural Commission (AgComm) member.

Minutes: Motion G. Adzima to approve March 16, 2010 minutes, and file the informational minutes of April 20, 2010 2009 minutes, Second W. Shattuck, Vote 4-0 (one abstention).

There was much discussion regarding the Chapter 61 Act. Some farmers are noting the person farming the land, perhaps with the most acreage, keeping land open, and who make the least amount of income, seem to be under a microscope and are being discussed as if what they do isn't at all valuable.

Alan, being here as homeowner in town, and not as a member, brought up a personal issue to the committee. He noted that he has been informed by town assessor office; he is no longer considered a "farmer". He has issue with that statement and wants to bring this type of issue to the member's attention, as he is probably not the only person this is happening to.

Hope said she made a call to the assessor office and spoke with John Whelihan. He kept referring to "laws" and asked if he could send her a copy of what he must follow. Hope would like to see the AgComm move in a direction to the citizens that are trying to farm, and not wait until they have issues and come in to the AgComm only when a problem persists. When the problem is happening it's too late to circumvent the issues.

The AgComm has been trying to identify their role in the community. In that they are unable to make decisions, they have felt they are in a position to aid with recommendations on where farmers can go.

Grace said when she asked a variety of people within government offices (i.e., Senator Kulik and the participants at the Hampshire County Council Government), what can be done about Chapter issues, everyone says that would be up to the assessor office. Discussed the roles the assessor office and the AgComm play with regard to farming actions.

The AgComm would like to see the appeal process handled closer to town, rather than driving to Boston which appears to be the choice of the assessor office. There may be another way to appeal, perhaps a written request for hearings to be held closer to Western MA. This will be looked in to. Brought up an idea to ask the Board of Selectmen to write a letter of support for farmers in town.

Hope wondered if sending the assessor office a list of the farms in town may help out farmers. Grace noted she will send a reminder to farmers by notice in *The Sentinel* for the Chapter 61 October 1st deadline. The members noted past experiences with deadline issues. Judy said there are classes available for training on Chapter 61.

Hope spoke to Roxanne about the Thursday Farmers Market layout. She knows of people who do not go to the farmer market as the layout is not comfortable. Perhaps if members of the

Agricultural Commission let the people in charge know how they feel about the way the stands are situated, maybe a change could come.

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

The next meeting will be June 15, 2010 at 7 pm.

Adjourned at 8:55 pm.

Minutes submitted by S. Gay