

Agricultural Commission
Sept. 16, 2008

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

Member present: G. Adzima, J. Clements, J. Gillan, H. Guardenier
Associate Members: S. Gay, A. Page, R. Reidy

Absent Members: W. Shattuck, D. Beaudette
Visitors: Barbara Hastings and Tom Hastings



Grace Adzima said the Boy Scouts held a Green Fair on the town common, and would like to hold another fair in April 2009.

Channel 5 has been showing blue ribbon cooks at various members homes preparing meals. This is a way to educate viewers on the farmer market produce and meat, as well as other local goods.

Hope Guardenier noted Sept. 18, 2008, 6 to 8 pm, the Committee for Environmental Sustaining Agriculture (CESA) will be holding a "meet and greet" session and welcome AgComm members.

Grace Adzima welcomed Mr. and Mrs. Hastings. They said they would be hosting Louise Butler and the 4H Club people at their alpaca farm, 11 Jeffrey Lane. This will be held the third week in October, after the farmer market is finished for the season.

They will also hold an "open house" October 13, 2008 and welcome all things agriculture. They said come and set up your wares. They have a "yurt" building and said AgComm could hold a meeting there sometime. It is 30 feet round, and 30 feet high, and taxed as an ancillary structure. Their alpaca farm is on the new farm map (2008-2009), and the map is being printed out by AgComm member Judy Gillan.

Grace said the Zoning Bylaws went to town meeting and approved by the Attorney General office. She thanked all who had a hand in improving and updating bylaws for the farmers.

The Hastings noted they have a light fixture on their farm for their animals and would like to see the bylaws include agricultural lighting, by right for farming.

Jon Clements said there are regulations in Town Bylaws for lighting, and there are Massachusetts General Laws for agriculture.

Noted the By-Right regulations for agriculture are a basic tool and each town should adopt their own wording. The AgComm said they would like to have a file showing basic information for issues which come to them, what they recommend.

The AgComm said they may seek the opinion of the Attorney General office for Belchertown's "Right to Farm" regulations, and where they need more work.

Judy Gillan spoke of an available grant to preserve agriculture landscape and Belchertown is eligible to apply for it through the D.C.R. She said she attended a class in September, noting the application process and how it is handled. She is putting a draft letter of interest together, and will request a letter of support from the Board of Selectmen. Judy went over what constitutes places to preserve, and how the State will identify, prioritize and place who gets on the list. This is a planning tool.

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Judy said the deadline to apply is Sept. 26, 2008, and she had most of the application complete. She asked for support from the AgComm.

Motion J. Clements, as a member, the Agricultural Commission support Judy Gillan's application for a grant to preserve agriculture landscape for the Town of Belchertown, **Second** G. Adzima, **Vote** 4-0.

The Hastings said they would like to see some agricultural workshops held in Western Mass. They said they see a lot of workshops held in the Eastern part of Massachusetts.

A member of the AgComm suggested when a farm property changes ownership, a buyer could come to an AgComm meeting, and AgComm could help with paperwork, for chapter land for instance. The AgComm would like to educate the public about agriculture. Discussed how to go about that – through the school system? This is also an area to explore.

Grace said she'd like to hold an information sharing meeting with other AgComm members from other surrounding towns, such as Ludlow and Granby. At the October AgComm meeting, we may discuss ideas for who to invite. J. Clements will not be at the October meeting.

The minutes from July 15, 2008 were approved. They will be filed with the Town Clerk office.

Adjourned at 8:35 pm.

minutes submitted by S. Gay