

**Agricultural Commission
Sept. 21, 2010**



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

Member present: Grace Adzima, Judith Gillan
Associate Members: Dan Beaudette, Sue Gay, Matt Kotowski
Absent Members: Mike Austin, ~~Judy Gillan~~, Alan Page
Also attending: Archie Archible, Board of Selectmen liaison

G. Adzima brought the meeting to order at 7:05 pm. There are two voting members present and so the committee will not vote on any item.

Grace introduced Archie to members who were present. The members introduced themselves to Archie.

Judy spoke of New England Small Farm Institute on Jackson Street. She told of the community garden, how it was an idea which came from this committee, and it has been successfully going for three years. She said there is a new fence on the farm and that will be pasture for cattle.

Matt said he has rare poultry and rabbits. He noted he went to school for Natural Resources Management and has also taken many agricultural science related classes. He would like to find a larger parcel to farm.

Sue said she and husband Charlie May have a Christmas tree farm on Franklin Street (Rt. 181).

Dan works for the United States Department of Agriculture as a legal advisor. The members here noted his knowledge of what is happening at that level is invaluable to the function of this commission.

Grace raises beef cattle. It is the same farm as her father and grandfather ran since the year 1902.

Grace noted to Archie that the goal of the Agricultural Commission is to be a voice for the farmer. She would like to see this commission work with various agencies as well as educate the public on farming practices. She explained some of the issues that have been brought up such as regulations for "manure" management brought to our attention by the Board of Health. Also, there were Zoning Bylaw regulations which were reviewed and made pertinent for the farmer, such as fencing.

Archie was given a farm guide and he said he didn't know there were so many farms in the Town of Belchertown. He was very interested in the information that was passed along to him tonight.

Discussed the Belchertown Fair and that the 250th anniversary of the town is coming up. There is a committee that gets together on the celebration of the anniversary. If someone comes up with an idea to put forth regarding farming in the 1700's please let us know. The AgComm would like to put a small paragraph together noting this town's farming history and what the town was like then. A question was raised as to how many cows, horses, etc. may have been part of this town at that time. Judy spoke about an etched piece of glass from an old building – Archie suggested the 250th anniversary committee may want to use it, and asked if Judy would talk to Bill Barnett about it.

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Discussed: Chapter 61: qualifications of farming and how Assessor consider the farmer income, appeals which have to go through offices in Boston; the American Farmland study showing tax base for farms versus residential homes; excise tax on animals and farm equipment and the AgComm wishing to bring this to a town meeting to ask the voters to repeal to help out famers; having another poultry class in January 2011 on raising and caring for poultry; the Board of Selectmen are meeting the second and fourth Monday of each month instead of every Monday; ask the Assessor office how much revenue is coming to the Town of Belchertown from animals and farm equipment; The Community Plan spoke by the townspeople noted they wanted to keep the rural look and feel of the Town of Belchertown. If it's tough on farmers and their markets they won't be able to survive.

Grace would like to have a letter to the Board of Selectmen about revenue from farming animals and equipment, and ask them if we can place a warrant article on the Annual Town Meeting for the farmers.

Education of the town's people will be an important part of the procedure.

Motion to adjourn D. Beaudette, Second G. Adzima

The next meeting will be October 19, 2010 at 7 pm.

Adjourned at 9:05 pm.

Minutes submitted by S. Gay