

RECV'D: Office of the Town Clerk June 19, 2015 8:51am
Durham Agricultural Commission
Meeting Minutes
Tuesday, May 19, 2015
7:00 pm, 3rd floor Meeting Room, Town Hall

Members: Fred Mastele, Warren Herzig, Roger Passavant

Alternates: Dick Porter, Joe Pasquale

Seating of Alternates:

Dick Porter was seated for Member David Zemelsky and Joe Pasquale was seated for Member Melissa Greenbacker

- 1) Meeting was called to order by Fred Mastele at 7:08 pm and roll call was taken.
- 2) Motion was made by Roger Passavant and seconded by Warren Herzig to accept the May 19, 2015 Meeting Agenda with one minor change of April to May. Motion passed unanimously.
- 3) Motion was made by Dick Porter and seconded by Warren Herzig to accept the April 21, 2015 Meeting Minutes with some minor changes. Deep River and Melynda had been misspelled and the date of the Equine Liability Seminar was incorrect. Motion passed unanimously. Minutes have been corrected and posted to Town website.
- 4) Public Comment. There was no public comment.
- 5) Old Business

Town Owned Properties / Guilford Road

Joe reported that he had asked Laura Francis about the status of the newly acquired Guilford Road properties. Laura said that she has been in contact with Skip Wimler regarding the haying of those properties for this season.

Deerfield Farm

Roger reported that he had questioned the Board of Selectmen at their last meeting about the status of the water storage tank and contaminated well at Deerfield Farm. Laura Francis reported that the tank had been drained down to below the seam in the tank, hopefully resolving any future leakage. She also reported that she and the Town's Health Department were still working on a resolution of the problem.

Dick Porter raised a concern in regards to whether any of the Town Officials had notified the Fire Department that the 15,000 gallon tank was now only half full.

Coginchaug River / Guilford Road Properties

Since Laura Francis had organized a site walk and meeting at the newly acquired Guilford Road properties, Fred inquired as to how these activities had progressed. (The meeting included members of the State D.E.E.P., the NRCS, the Town Public Works Department, The Conservation Commission and the Agricultural Commission.)

Laura's objectives for the meeting were to determine the best use for the properties and the best way to care for and maintain them. There was a long discussion among the Ag Commission members who attended the site walk. There seemed to be quite a bit of disagreement between the Commissions and the State Agencies as to how these properties and the Coginchaug River that passes through them should be maintained and cared for.

This led the Ag Commission into an overall discussion, once again, regarding the condition of the Coginchaug River as well as the Durham Meadows Property.

Roger suggested that the Ag Commission should offer to manage the Guilford Road properties for the Town of Durham. Fred said he would speak with Laura Francis regarding the offer.

Plan of Conservation and Development

Signs, signs, everywhere signs. Joe reported that the Planning and Zoning Commission was still working on the new Sign Regulations and therefore has yet to start work on the POCD. He also reported that the P&Z had been busy working on Main Street residential areas in regards to possibly allowing more commercial zoning there.

6) New Business

Community Investment Act

Fred once again voiced concerns over the State budgetary cuts involving the Community Investment Act. Fred reported that the scenic trail in Guilford was funded by the C.I.A. and that it served all communities, not just the Agricultural community. He recommended contacting local State reps and legislators.

Taxable Services

Fred reported that, as part of the budget negotiations, the State was considering adding some services to the taxable list. Veterinarian services would now be taxable. Fred was concerned this could hurt already financially-strained farmers.

2015 Ag Member Terms

Fred reported that three Member and one Alternate Ag terms were up in July 2015. Warren and David, who were both in attendance, stated that they would continue on the Commission. Melissa and Phyllis were not in attendance.

Hay

Warren raised an interesting question regarding the community of local hay providers. He has noticed that the average age of those hay farmers is quite a bit older than it used to be. He wondered if one of the local Schools or Ag Programs should set up an Apprentice Program to teach the next generation about hay production.

Open House / Star Light Gardens

David reported on an open house he held at his vegetable farm. He said the event and tours of the farm went quite well. He mentioned that he had advertised it through his mailing list and on Facebook. Fred wondered if the Durham Ag Commission should start a Facebook page?

Motion to Adjourn

Motion was made by David Zemelsky and seconded by Warren Herzig. The meeting was adjourned at 8:22 pm.