

**MINUTES  
AGRICULTURAL COMMITTEE  
REGULAR SCHEDULED MEETING  
HYBRID PARTICIPATION  
December 8, 2021**

**OPENING:** 7:09 p.m. Chairman Hansen opened the hybrid meeting is being held via Zoom and in person at the Land Use Meeting Room in Town Hall by announcing a roll call attendance, that the meeting is being recorded, and noted the regulations associated with a remote meeting.

**ATTENDANCE**

Burt Hansen, Chairman	Present
Dan Cook, Commissioner	Absent
Zach Barnett, Commissioner	Present
Ron Cecchini, Commissioner	Present
Brett Colson, Commissioner	Present
Lenita Bober, Commissioner	Present
Tammy Ciak-Bissaillon, Commissioner	Present
Bob Mucha	Absent
Dennis Clark	Present
Maryssa Cook-Obregon	Present

**MINUTES**

Chairman Hansen made a motion to accept the minutes of November 10, 2021. Vice Chairman Colson seconded the motion. The roll call vote was as follows:

Chairman Hansen	yes	Vice Chairman Colson	yes
Commissioner Barnett	yes	Commissioner Cecchini	yes
Commissioner Ciak-Bissaillon	yes	Commissioner Bober	yes
Commissioner Cook-Obregon	abstained	Commissioner Clark	abstained

Chairman Hansen made note that the Select Board will not appoint Sage Fury at this time as they are establishing a policy relative to appointments and terms of commissions and are not processing any new appointees at this time.

Commissioner Clark made a statement relative to his reappointment to the Commission. He read from the Town Meeting where the Agricultural Commission was to include four members that are “real farmers”. It was his opinion that he is a more than qualified candidate but was removed from the Committee as he was involved with the preservation of too much land. Commissioner Clark noted that the appointment of a one year term was contradictory to Article 11 which passed at a Town Meeting in 2006. Though no official notification from the Select Board has been sent, it appears that Mr. Mucha had resigned. The creation of the Agricultural Committee was specifically for the preservation of land and the current members are dedicated to achieve the intent of the creation of the Committee.

## DISCUSSION

**Master Plan** Chairman Hansen and Commissioner Cook-Obregon are both members of the Committee. There was a decision to hire a consultant PBPC, who will present a draft for the next meeting. There are 17 members of the Committee with representatives from many Boards and Committees.

**Social Media Policy** Chairman sent the policy to all the members of the Committee. There was a “witness” line, Commissioner Ciak-Bissaillon stated that her form was accepted without the witness signature. The Facebook page is on the Agricultural Commission on the town website. Chairman Hansen and Commissioner Barnett are administrators with Jim Middleton for a final approval. Commissioner Ciak-Bissaillon asked if the grant information could be put on the Facebook page. Commissioner Ciak-Bissaillon was still able to post to the page as one of the individuals eligible to post. The Commission will need to understand what the procedures are for final approval. Chairman Hansen will discuss it with Mr. Middleton.

Commissioner Ciak-Bissaillon reported on a workshop including a panel of various individuals who attended a meeting discussing current climate change issues and what currently and, in the future, can be of help to agricultural. The average temp has gone up one degree for each of the last 10 years which can cause an increase in pests. Some of the information was relevant specifically to our area. For the future the USDA will have local information on various programs. Commissioner Cook-Obregon suggested that the recording of the meeting can be of interest to residents and may be put on the Agricultural Commissioner web page.

**Open Space Plan** The document has all the APR and Chapter lands defined. There is a lot of pertinent information including a survey of Southwick residents relative to protection and preservation of farm land. The document included goals and objectives focusing on preservation for the present and the future and who is responsible to retain open land in Southwick. The document was created as an incentive for grant funding. Commissioner Cook-Obregon suggested that the document should be shared with the members of the Master Plan Committee. Since the creation of the document, the Open Space Committee was dissolved. Commissioner Clark related that the Select Board was concentrating on development not land preservation. Commissioner Cook-Obregon suggested that the document, particularly excerpts that refer to land preservation, should be put on the Agricultural Committee Facebook page.

**Community Garden** Chairman Hansen stated that the garden is closed for the season. The Committee thanked Commissioner Cecchini for tilling the garden and all his efforts to help the community residents in their gardening endeavors.

**Right to Farm** Chairman Hansen will send the document to Commissioner Cook-Obregon to create a document that can be presented to potential/actual purchasers of properties/dwellings in Southwick.

**Farm Brochure** Commissioner Cook-Obregon questioned where funds will come from printing the brochure once it was finalized. Commissioner Barnett will finalize the document and contact the

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farmers to ensure accuracy. Commissioner Cook-Obregon suggested a fund raiser to procure funds for printing. Once the document is finalized, it can go out for printing quotations. The Agricultural Committee does have a budget which will likely not be sufficient for printing the brochures.

**Kellogg Property** The property has been purchased contingent that it could be built upon. It was the hope of the Commission that the property will be retained in its natural state. There is a portion around the dwelling and the former business that has still not been purchased which may be preserved.

**Small Farming** The Farmland Trust has funds that may be used for potential land preservation for those who have less than 5 acres. A reach out plan may be created to other communities that may be interested in participation. A letter of support issued to the Massachusetts Legislator may help change the required amount of acreage. Some use Chapter 61A as a tax right off and do not function as an actual farm. Commissioners Cook-Obregon and Ciak-Bissaillon will work together to create a petition and contact other communities that may be interested in signing a joint petition.

**Planning Board Meeting** Chairman Hansen was notified that there is a potential purchase the land across from the Hash House. The land is approximately 2 to 3 acres for a growing operation of marijuana within a building. Most of the land will be retained in its natural state. Unfortunately, the land is not zoned for that type of business at this time. This is the type of business that could bring revenue and preserve land. The business would be a growing only proposal and not a dispensary.

Chairman Hansen made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:25 PM. Commissioner Bober seconded the motion. The roll call vote was as follows:

Chairman Hansen	yes	Vice Chairman Colson	yes
Commissioner Barnett	yes	Commissioner Cecchini	yes
Commissioner Ciak-Bissaillon	yes	Commissioner Bober	yes
Commissioner Cook-Obregon	yes	Commissioner Clark	yes

Next scheduled meeting is January 12, 2022

Respectfully submitted,

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Jean Nilsson

cc:

Select Board  
Town Clerk

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Burt Hansen, Chairman

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Brett Colson, Vice Chairman

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Dan Cook, Commissioner

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Zach Barnett, Commissioner

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Bob Mucha, Commissioner

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Dennis Clark, Commissioner

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Date

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Ron Cecchini, Commissioner

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Tammy Ciak-Bissaillon, Commissioner

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Lenita Bober, Commissioner

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Maryssa Cook-Obregon, Commissioner