

**MINUTES
AGRICULTURAL COMMISSION
REGULAR SCHEDULED MEETING
March 9, 2022**

OPENING: 7:00 p.m. Chairman Hansen opened the special hybrid meeting 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	Present
Zach Barnett, Alternate	Present
Ron Cecchini, Commissioner	Absent
Brett Colson, Alternate	Present
Lenita Bober, Commissioner	Present
Tammy Ciak-Bissaillon, Commissioner	Present
Dennis Clark, Commissioner	Present
Maryssa Cook-Obregon, Commissioner	Present

MINUTES

Chairman Hansen made a motion to approve the minutes of 2/9/22 with the spelling correction for Magni. Commissioner Ciak-Bissaillon seconded the motion. The roll call vote was as follows:

Burt Hansen	yes	Brett Colson	yes
Dennis Clark	yes	Maryssa Cook-Obregon	yes
Dan Cook	yes	Zach Barnett	yes
Lenita Bober	yes	Tammy Ciak-Bissaillon	yes

GUEST SPEAKER

Al Averill – Soil Scientist – American Farmland Trust Mr. Averill attended the meeting to discuss designating farmland importance. The topic of discussion was the importance of crop production for food supply purposes including haying as a source of food for animals that are processed. There are “prime”, and “unique” categories of farmland which are evaluated in relation to statewide importance. Farmland of local importance is defined in the Code of Federal Regulations and the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) maintains a soil survey for nationwide resources. The American Farmland Trust partnered with NRCS to identify and recognize farmland of local importance and may assist with identifying soils that have the potential to be designated as Farmland of Local Importance. Mr. Averill presented a Power Point explaining his role in the American Farmland Trust and how the trust can work with

properties in Southwick for the preservation of farmland. The program is similar to the APR program that will have a monetary value to owners of farmland should they choose to join the program. Mr. Averill will need assistance to identify local lands to evaluate the crop potential and soils.

Commissioner Clark made a motion to proceed with joining the American Farmland Trust for the Town of Southwick. Commissioner Ciak-Bissaillon seconded the motion. The roll call vote was as follows:

Burt Hansen yes
Dennis Clark yes
Dan Cook yes
Lenita Bober yes

Brett Colson yes
Maryssa Cook-Obregon yes
Zach Barnett yes
Tammy Ciak-Bissaillon yes

MDAR Grants Chairman Hansen received a list of grant available from MDAR from Tina Smith. The list will be posted on the Agricultural Commission Face page.

426 Noth Loomis –Commissioner Cook conducted a site visit and questioned if the crossing will impact the wetlands relative to Conservation. The project as presented is exempt from the Wetlands Protection Act as it is for agricultural purposes only.

Bylaw Review There will be a meeting scheduled on March 22nd as a work session for the Planning Board relative to Bylaw changes. The Agricultural Committee members are welcome to attend.

Right to Farm Chairman Hansen presented a draft document for review. Commissioner Cook-Obregon will insert relevant photos and will have an updated form at the next scheduled meeting. Once the document is completed and approved, it will be distributed to real estate agents, within the Town Hall, and on the Agricultural Commission Face book. Commissioner Cook made note that New England has the least amount of designated farmland. Some farms have been combined as some families are no longer able to farm, or descendants no longer want to continue farming.

Farm Brochure Commissioner Cook-Obregon has completed the brochure, but due to the recent change at Meadow View Farm, will have to revise it. Additional trail maps provided by Commissioner Clark and Mr. Pratt were also added. The estimated cost to print 500 copies at Southwoods is \$332.92. Commissioner Cook-Obregon made a motion to secure a purchase order in the amount from the fiscal year 2022 budget. Commissioner Barnett seconded the motion. The roll call vote was as follows:

Burt Hansen yes
Dennis Clark yes
Dan Cook yes
Lenita Bober yes

Vice Chairman Colson yes
Maryssa Cook-Obregon yes
Zach Barnett yes
Tammy Ciak-Bissaillon yes

MDAR Workshop Commissioner Cook-Obregon will schedule a workshop with Sue Gore, Assessor and MDAR members on April 20th at 7:00 p.m.

FY 2023 Budget Chairman Hansen reviewed the budget that had already been submitted to accounting. Items include \$750.00 for consultant and \$500.00 as a capital expenditure to repair the well at the Community Garden. It was also suggested by Mr. Sage Fury, 91 Granville Road, that some funding can be used for a youth section of the garden.

72 Mort Vining Road Chairman Hansen spoke with the landowner who was interested in preserving a large portion of the 31 acre parcel. There is a dwelling and barn on the land that can be portioned out and have the remaining land be APR. An existing purchase and sale agreement for the entire parcel is at \$450,000.00. The Town has not acted on their Right Of First Refusal as of this meeting. In the event the land can be reserved for preservation, a Warrant Article to secure funding from CPR must be submitted by April 1st for the Annual Town Meeting. Mr. Fury suggested that the barn wood could be sold, but Commissioner Clark suggested that the Agricultural Commission focus on the land only, and not the structures.

Meadow View Farm Chairman noted that the farm stand will not open for the spring season. Commissioner Bober stated that the parcel is in APR.

Davis Road Commissioner Bober related that the parcel may not be considered for APR due to the exclusion of 10 acres which would make the property land locked.

Microsoft Teams Mr. Fury is working on a presentation for sharing information through Microsoft Teams. However, the program may not have the security measures to avoid violating the Open Meeting Law. The issue will be discussed at the next meeting.

Less than 5 acres Commissioner Ciak-Bissaillon noted that the MDAR has the subject on their radar. The Agricultural Commission member will join with other commissions to support the idea.

Chairman Hansen made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:42 p.m. Commissioner Clark seconded the motion. The roll call vote was as follows:

Burt Hansen yes
Dennis Clark yes
Dan Cook yes
Lenita Bober yes

Brett Colson yes
Maryssa Cook-Obregon yes
Zach Barnett yes
Tammy Ciak-Bissaillon yes

Respectfully submitted,

Jean Nilsson
cc:

Select Board
Town Clerk

Burt Hansen, Chairman

Brett Colson, Vice Chairman

Dan Cook, Commissioner

Ron Cecchini, Commissioner

Zach Barnett, Commissioner

Tammy Ciak-Bissaillon, Commissioner

Dennis Clark, Commissioner

Lenita Bober, Commissioner

Maryssa Cook-Obregon, Commissioner

Date