

**MINUTES  
AGRICULTURAL COMMISSION  
REGULAR SCHEDULED MEETING  
April 20, 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	Absent
Zach Barnett, Alternate	Absent
Ron Cecchini, Commissioner	Present
Brett Colson, Vice Chairman/Alternate	Absent
Lenita Bober, Commissioner	Present
Tammy Ciak-Bissaillon, Commissioner	Present
Dennis Clark, Commissioner	Absent
Maryssa Cook-Obregon, Commissioner	Present
Sage Fury, Alternate	Present

**MINUTES**

Chairman Hansen made a motion to approve the minutes of 32/9/22 and 4/13/22i. Commissioner Bober seconded the motion. The roll call vote was as follows:

Burt Hansen	yes	Maryssa Cook-Obregon	yes
Ron Cecchini	yes	Lenita Bober	yes
Tammy Ciak-Bissaillon	yes	Sage Fury	yes

**MAIL**

**Fy 22 Budget** Chairman Hansen noted that the amount for the printing of the farm brochure is now encumbered. The printing and invoice will need to be completed before the end of the 2022 fiscal year.

**Cornhole Tournament** The Commission received a notice from the Lions Club on a cornhole tournament to be held May 15, 2022.

**Art Exhibition** The Commission received an invitation to the Art Exhibition to be held at Town Hall on April 22 – 24, 2022

**GUEST**

Ms. Cynthia Barton attended the meeting via Zoom for information related to agriculture. Ms. Barton inquired about an internship program for the purpose of a school project specifically

related to marketing. Commissioner Cook-Obregon stated that there are no large farms in Southwick and most do just local advertising. The Future Farmers of America is not available in the Southwick school system. Ms. Barton is studying future alternatives for existing farming methods such as underwater farming. The Commission applauded Ms. Barton's efforts to assist how farming can change using new methodology in the future.

**Sage Fury** Chairman Hansen announced that Mr. Sage Fury has been appointed by the Select Board as an alternate. The Agricultural Committee now has 7 members and 3 alternates. However, Alternate Colson has also been elected as a Vice Chairman. Chairman Hansen will inquire if a full members must be appointed to the Vice Chairman position.

## **BUSINESS**

**Master Plan** Chairman Hansen stated that Pioneer Valley Planning Authority was in the process of completing a survey scheduled for after the Annual Town meeting in May. Members of the Agricultural Committee agreed that open space and farming will need to be included in the survey to better understand the future of farming in Southwick. Commissioner Cecchini also suggested that forested land be included as there are some large parcels of land that are forested. Commissioner Ciak-Bissaillon related a current plan by Mass Pollinator Network to develop a potential route for bees to travel for honey production. In essence, it would create a "bee buffet" along a tract of plants which would also assist in pollination of plants.

**Right to Farm** Commissioner Cook-Obregon created an informational document explaining what the Right to Farm Bylaw means for potential property owners. There is a narrative of the history of farming in Southwick. The document will be available to realtors and in Town Hall. Chairman Hansen will ask the Select Board if they can assist in distribution.

**Farm Brochure** Commissioner Cook-Obregon is working with Southwoods on a template for the brochure. Meadow View farms needed to be removed as they are no longer in business. Commissioner Bober noted that there was a potential buyer of the property, but nothing has been finalized as of this meeting. Similar farms may be overwhelmed with additional business for the seasons.

**72 Mort Vining Road** Chairman Hansen related that there is an issue between the buyer and seller relative to the Purchase and Sale Agreement. Town Counsel is of the opinion that the "potential" purchaser cannot petition the Town to remove the property from Chapter 61A. They can purchase the land as is, and once the sale is finalized, then they may need to petition the Town for removal from Chapter 61A if they plan to develop the property for residential housing.

**426 Noth Loomis** –Chairman Hansen stated that the parcel had been approved to be removed from Chapter 61A. The property owner will build a single family residence, then at some point

in the future have 5 acres returned to Chapter 61A for potential haying by a neighboring farmer. It would not be feasible to farm the land until the completion of the single family dwelling.

**Community Garden** Chairman Hansen stated that Commissioner Cecchini roto tilled the garden and the Commission appreciated his efforts for the future gardeners. Plots have already been reserved. It was suggested bee hives be allowed in the garden area, however, gardeners may be allergic to bee stings. Another site further from the garden plots may be a possibility for hives. The Committee will need to decide a location and if there will be a rental charge. Chairman Hansen will contact the Conservation Commission as the land is under their jurisdiction. Alternate Commissioner Fury also suggested that there be a seed dispensary for the precipitants to share. Commissioner Ciak-Bissaillon noted that the Town Library has a seed program. Alternate Commissioner Fury also suggested a rock collection to build stone walls around the garden. The public could be asked to bring rocks from their property for the construction. Rock walls are more durable and permanent than wooden fencing.

**Open Farm Day** The Committee discussed various plans for an open farm day including a potential location such as the parking lot at the Congregational Church. Food vendors could also participate along with local farms. The event could take place at the end of September. The event could be coordinated with the weekend that Granby holds their farm day as a continuation of participants at the Granby event.

**Brzoska Farm** Chairman Hansen was requested by Mr. Brzoska as to why he has to pay a fee for scale calibration that he only uses 13 days a year. Commissioner Bober related that it was a State mandate, not a Town mandate and that there is a charge for calibration of all scales at similar businesses.

**Davis Road & 217 Sheep Pasture Road** There is no new information on these properties. Commissioner Ciak-Bissaillon has a meeting with representatives of MDAR to discuss what progress is being made to include properties in land preservation that are under the currently required 5 acres.

**Chapter 61A Workshop** Commissioner Cook-Obregon will schedule a meeting with Sue Gore, Assessor and members of MDAR to discuss taxation on the properties after the Annual Town Meeting. Chairman Hansen will inquire if this would be considered a “meeting” if members of the Agricultural Committee attend, and if so, how would it need to be posted.

**Land Protection List** Chairman Hansen distributed a listing from the Planning Board of Chapter 61A lands from 15 to 115 acres. These properties have the potential to qualify for land preservation.

Commissioner Bober made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:40 p.m. Commissioner Clark seconded the motion. The roll call vote was as follows:

Burt Hansen	yes	Maryssa Cook-Obregon	yes
Ron Cecchini	yes	Lenita Bober	yes
Tammy Ciak-Bissaillon	yes	Sage Fury	yes

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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Ron Cecchini, Commissioner

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Zach Barnett, Commissioner

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Tammy Ciak-Bissaillon, Commissioner

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Dennis Clark, Commissioner

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Lenita Bober, Commissioner

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Maryssa Cook-Obregon, Commissioner

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Date