

**MINUTES**  
**AGRICULTURAL COMMISSION**  
**REGULAR SCHEDULED MEETING**  
**February 8, 2023**

**OPENING:** 7:00 p.m. Chairman Hansen opened the hybrid meeting by announcing the members in attendance.

**ATTENDANCE**

Burt Hansen, Chairman	Present
Dan Cook, Commissioner	Present
Zach Barnett, Alternate	Present
Ron Cecchini, Commissioner	Present
Brett Colson, Vice Chairman/Alternate	Absent
Lenita Bober, Commissioner	Present
Tammy Ciak-Bissaillon, Commissioner	Present
Maryssa Cook-Obregon, Commissioner	Present
Sage Fury, Alternate	Present

**MINUTES**

Commissioner Barnett made a motion to approve the minutes of December 14, 2022. Commissioner Cook-Obregon seconded the motion. The roll call vote was as follows:

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

**PUBLIC COMMENTS**

There were no public comments

**NEW BUSINESS**

**Farmers Forum** Members of the Ag Com conducted a forum at the Southwick Public Library on January 11<sup>th</sup> at 6:30 pm. Chairman Hansen composed a follow up review (attached). There were approximately 30 attendees, 20 of which were farmers. Topics covered were to support farms as businesses – conservation of land preservation – grant resources – gardening – farming programs – website information. There were several ideas on future meetings including contacting farmers through an email address data base.

The members discussed plans for an Open Farm Day possibly August 20<sup>th</sup> with Whalley Park as a “base of operations.” Commissioner Cook-Obregon suggested that the Open Farm Day center on actual farm location visits as opposed to something similar to the Farm Parade. Maps could be handed out for the participating farm locations with a starting point and a volunteer at each farm as the summer/fall is busy seasons for farmers. It was also suggested that tee shirts be made for sale that represented the Agricultural Commission and the farming community. Commissioner Cook-Obregon will obtain an estimate from a vendor.

**Trust for Public Land** The Commissioners discussed the proposed purchase of land associated with the NE Scenic Trail. There is a potential, once the land is donated, for the Fish & Wildlife to change the zone from AC to a wildlife sanctuary. Closing on the property will be in April/May. The Commission will revisit the proposal after getting more information and/or issuing an invitation to the potential owners to a meeting. Mr. Dwight Arnold stated that he would be more than willing to purchase the portion of land currently used for tobacco and continuing to use it only for the purpose of growing the crop.

**72 Mort Vining Road** The Commission was informed that the property is being removed from Chapter 61A and is in the process of developing a residential subdivision. Attempts were previously made to preserve the property, however, there is only a 30-day period for the Town to consider exercising its right of first refusal. Commissioner Cook-Obregon created a potential procedure for the Right of First Refusal requests which will be reviewed at a future meeting.

**FY 24 Budget** Chairman Hansen submitted the budget which included a request for increased funds, largely for Open Farm Day expenses.

## **OLD BUSINESS**

**Agricultural Committee Members** Chairman Hansen announced that Commissioners Cook-Obregon and Bober requested to be changed to alternative members, and Alternate Colson will submit a letter of resignation. Jessica Parker, 62 Sheep Pasture Road, is interested in becoming a member and will meet with the Select Board. Mr. Lucas Caron, 148 Hillside Road, is also interested in becoming a youth member similar the membership on the Master Plan Committee.

**Master Plan** Chairman Hansen related informational topics that are being reviewed including economic development, transportation, housing, schools etc.

**Sofinowski Land Preserve** Commissioner Cook-Obregon obtained a quote for the “enter” and “exit” signs from Southwoods at \$365.03. Commissioner Cook-Obregon made a motion that the Agricultural Committee purchase the signs. Alternate Commissioner Barnett seconded the motion.

The roll call vote was unanimous.

Burt Hansen    yes

Tammy Ciak-Bissaillon    yes

Zach Barnett    yes

Ron Cecchini    yes

Maryssa Cook-Obregon    yes

Sage Fury    yes

Lenita Bober    yes

Dan Cook    yes

**Rotary Club** There will be an event on February 23<sup>rd</sup> on Operation Pollination. The webinar will present information on how to create s pollinated garden. Chairman Hansen will issue the link.

**FFA** Commissioner Cook will attend a meeting in Suffield on how to develop a curriculum for a farmers event.

**BigY** The Agricultural Commission members wished to thank Big Y for their donation that was used at the Farmers' Forum event.

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, Alternate

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Dan Cook, Commissioner

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Ron Cecchini, Commissioner

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Zach Barnett, Alternate

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Tammy Ciak-Bissaillon, Commissioner

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Lenita Bober, Commissioner

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Maryssa Cook-Obregon, Commissioner

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Sage Fury, Alternate

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Date