

**MINUTES**  
**AGRICULTURAL COMMISSION**  
**REGULAR SCHEDULED MEETING**  
**December 14, 2022**

**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	Absent
Zach Barnett, Alternate	Present
Ron Cecchini, Commissioner	Absent
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**

Chairman Hansen made a motion to approve the minutes of November 9, 2022. Commissioner Ciak-Bissaillon 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

**GUESTS**

Mr. Michael Pietruska, Board Member and Ms. Maureen Freniere, Vice Chair of the Hampden County Improvement League (HCIL) made a presentation of their role in agriculture preservation. The HCIL was founded in 1913 with assistance of representative from towns within Hampden County. The original intent was to bring new innovative programs relative to farming to the community. Since that time, the HCIL created the 4-H, secured loans for farmers and assisted in formation of the Farm Bureau. Ms. Freniere explained that a focus is on scholarship programs to educate young adults who wish to pursue a career in agriculture and is active at the various fairs. There are limited schools that offer educational programs relative to farming activities. Southwick students need to be transported to Smith Vocational, Franklin Technical and Westfield Technical for agricultural related courses. Grants have been awarded to students to participate in agricultural

programs who may not have had the financial ability to pursue further education. Technical advancement and alternate farming methods are explored and encouraged. Funding for various activities and grants is mainly through membership and wise investment of the HCIL financial advisors. The Agricultural Committee will look forward to working with members of the HCIL in a joint effort to promote future farming endeavors.

### **NEW BUSINESS**

**Farmers Forum** Members of the Ag Com will conduct a forum at the Southwick Public Library on January 11<sup>th</sup> at 6:30 pm. The intent of the forum is to communicate with farmers what their needs are to continue to do business in Southwick. Topics such as grant writing will be addressed. The flyer for the forum is almost complete and will be mailed to the area farmers.

**Home & Vegetable Garden** Ms. Lynn Blair, Southwick Library, is sponsoring an informational meeting on gardening tips for growing healthy and delicious produce. The event will take place on January 25<sup>th</sup> at 6:30 pm with a snow date of February 1<sup>st</sup>.

**Ag Com Website** Progress is still being made to present the website to the public.

### **OLD BUSINESS**

**Sofinowski Land Preserve** Commissioner Fury donated a porta-potty for all those who worked at the cleanup. There were approximately the equivalent of 5 Volkswagens of plants and overgrowth burned since the beginning of the cleanup. There is not another scheduled cleanup as of this meeting. Commissioner Bober volunteered her equipment to cut larger trees. The Ag Com did get permission from the Conservation Commission to cut trees larger than 3 inches in diameter. Commissioner Barnett offered a gift certificate from Big Y to help with expenses such as a case of water for the volunteers.

There has been no quote for the “enter” – “exit” signs from Southwoods as of this meeting.

**Master Plan** Chairman Hansen noted that the members will be meeting on December 15<sup>th</sup> and have presented some of the survey results.

**New England Fruit & Vegetable Conference** Commissioner Bober attended the conference, but there was not much information relative to agriculture. It was mainly a sales event.

**Farm Brochure** The brochure needs to be updated as Pumpkin Valley Farm is no longer in business.

**Youth Members** Mr. Lucas Carron applied to be a member of the Ag Com. However, Mr. Caron is not of an age to be able to vote. Chairman Hansen stated that Michelle Hill is researching the matter. Jessica Parker, 62 Sheep Pasture Road, made note that Mr. Caron is a “special youth member” of the Master Plan Committee. The issue will be addressed at a future Select Board meeting.

**Holiday Gathering** Town Hall will host a Holiday gathering on Friday December 16 from 5:00 – 7:00 pm

**Holiday Closing** Town Hall will be closed on December 23rd and 26th and January 2nd for the holidays.

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