

City of Keene
New Hampshire

AGRICULTURE COMMISSION
MEETING MINUTES

Wednesday, June 14, 2017

3:30 pm

City Hall, Fourth Floor Conference
Room

+

Members Present:

Sarah Wilton, Chair
Charles Daloz, Vice Chair
Councilor Bettina A. Chadbourne
Mark Florenz
Megan Straughen

Staff Present:

Michele Chalice, Planner

Members Not Present:

Aaron Moody

1) **Call to order**

Chair Wilton called the meeting to order at 3:35 PM.

2) **Approve May 10, 2017 minutes**

Chair Wilton made a motion to approve the minutes from May 10, 2017, Mr. Daloz seconded and it passed unanimously.

3) **Status: Urban Agriculture Project @ Bent Ct.**

Ms. Chalice said there was a meeting with the staff at Public Works office (PW) and the project sponsor, John Mitchell, to talk about details of the Urban Agriculture Project at Bent Court. She said Donna Hanscom, Assistant Public Works Director will take on the project and present it to the full City Council. Ms. Chalice invited AGC committee members to come see the presentation if they choose but it is not mandatory. She said Ms. Hanscom is thrilled with project and everyone is on board, however, Ms. Hanscom wants to present the project to the City so that they are aware of the project's activities occurring on City property. She said the City will take over project activities from now on. Chair Wilton suggested they remove this item from the agenda for next week. Ms. Chalice agreed. Mr. Daloz asked Ms. Chalice for an update on the project as it develops. Ms. Chalice expressed what good news it is for the government to partner with the community in a situation that will allow youth to acquire real world experience while providing a service for the City. She said her only concern is the timing because the

teacher wanted to start in June but that Donna will handle the time frame from this point forward.

4) City Committee discussion/survey

Committee members discussed the length of the pdf file and how it was so large they could not view it properly. Ms. Chalice apologized for the size of the file which was extra-large due to the inclusion of maps she promised to include from last meeting.

Chair Wilton handed out survey copies to committee members and asked them to complete survey as it may stimulate new ideas. She asked if surveys need to be filled out today and Ms. Chalice replied that it would be great to have them back this week. Chair Wilton suggested that everyone take surveys home to be completed and then email them back to Ms. Chalice. Ms. Chalice suggested that committee members express their opinions about having staff present on City committee meetings. Chair Wilton said she thinks having a staff person present at meetings is helpful because they bring a government perspective and skills to the table and can acquire resources easily to provide for committee members. Ms. Chalice said she believes her role is helpful but as a staff person she is limited in her role within the committee which she feels can be an awkward place to be. She said she is curious to see what survey results show about committee members' opinions.

Chair Rubin asked Ms. Chalice if the new City Manager is pushing for the surveys. Ms. Chalice explained that although Medard Kopczynski, the City Manager, is newer to his position and will only be City Manager until December, that he is not new to the City as he had been Director of Code and Health Safety for a long time. But as City Manager he is interested in exploring the functions of the City through some analysis before a new City Manager arrives. Councilor Chadbourne said that this is not the first time that committees have been evaluated and consolidated as a result of surveys. She used the example of the Planning Department being one of the smallest departments but they cover the most committee meetings and are spread very thinly. Ms. Chalice explained that there are certain requirements for City meetings like minute taking, documentation and specific steps that must be taken, which differs from a committee of volunteers. Ms. Chadbourne said she thinks the support of staff liaisons differs with the needs of each committee but for AGC she believes it is very important to have a staff liaison to provide the committee with resources and serve as a conduit of information about City policies. Chair Wilton said she believes there is a lot of cross-fertilization between AGC and other institutions and departments and helps to have a staff liaison to help committee navigate these diverse institutions.

Ms. Chalice emphasized that it is important for the Chair to express the importance of continuing to have a staff liaison in the AGC to the Council. Mr. Florenz asked if there was a strong possibility of losing the staff liaison and Councilor Chadbourne said recommendations will be made before the Council and they will consider different factors for each committee based upon their feedback. Ms. Chalice encouraged everyone to use

the survey as the main means of making their ideas or sentiments known. Councilor Chadbourne asked what committee members' opinions are about the AGC. Chair Wilton replied that in her survey she made sure to emphasize how important the commission is for the city of Keene. Ms. Straughen said that she also feels it is very important for a staff person to be present as she does not possess a deep understanding of the inner workings of City government, and Mr. Florenz reiterated the same. Mr. Daloz said a lot of the work is planning-related and there is a lack of understanding about the way city government functions among members. Mr. Florenz agreed that having someone whose full-time job is within the City really helps inform the committee. Councilor Chadbourne emphasized that committee members are already very limited with time and having a staff liaison allows the committee to network with other departments more easily. Mr. Florenz pointed out that AGC has no budget so the city connection is the one resource the City allows them. Chair Wilton motioned that Ms. Chalice convey the importance of continuing to have staff support to the Planning department director, Ms. Straughen seconded and motion was passed by unanimous vote.

5) Brainstorming & Task Generation for Agriculture Education and Outreach

Chair Wilton suggested the idea of recognizing a Farmer of the Year with an award to promote AGC and the community. She said she believes the emphasis should be on a Fall festival or Community Gathering instead of a Pumpkin Festival which was the former concept. She said these types of ideas involve outreach. Ms. Chadbourne said that "Let it Shine" has come forth to the Council to promote having pumpkins available at the Fall Festival for kids, however, there is still reticence about having pumpkins at all after the Pumpkin festival debacle from a couple of years ago. Mr. Florenz said the AGC should be engaged in the Fall Festival, for example attend a meeting with the Fall Festival committee as there is interest in having the farming community involved. Mr. Daloz suggested approaching the Monadnock Farm and Community Coalition as well.

Ms. Straughen said she received the minutes for the Keene Downtown group and there was talk about having hayrides for both the Fall Festival and the Pumpkin Festival and it was unclear whether or not there would be a Pumpkin Festival this year. Ms. Chadbourne said so far it is only an idea that has been presented to City Council but she was not aware of a vote having been made. Ms. Straughen said the websites show a date for Fall Festival but not for Pumpkin festival. Mr. Florenz added that he sees AGC more involved with the Fall Festival because it is City-run, there is a committee and it is easier to interface with the committee and Ms. Straughen agreed. Ms. Chalice said it would be best for someone from AGC attend one of the meetings for the Fall Festival. Mr. Florenz suggested reaching out to Carl Jacobs for details about meetings and he agreed that he would contact him. Ms. Chadbourne asked Ms. Straughen to look at the City website to look up Fall Festival committee meeting dates. Ms. Chalice created a task list on the white board. Ms. Chadbourne said that Mark suggested reaching out to local farmers about Fall Festival and Chair Wilton suggested contacting Keene State College and other colleges for potential academic or student contributions such as a poetry contest. Ms. Chalice suggested expanding methods of participation. Ms. Chalice suggested having apple orchards as part of the Fall Festival and having a table to sell apples and pies. Ms.

Straughen said the Fall Festival dates are not listed on the City Clerk website, only the 2016 dates. Ms. Chalice asked if there are any more outreach tasks. Chair Wilton suggested that the Farmer of Year award can be perhaps be established by Fall 2018. Charles suggested bringing Chair Wilton's Agriculture Presentation to other community groups, organizations, committees, Lyon's Club and Ms. Chalice asked if he wanted to deliver the slide presentation.

Chair Wilton said that because Keene needs jobs the message should be bringing agriculture jobs to Keene as being a component of Keene's job deficit. She said Keene has 300 years of agricultural heritage and if the City focused on those jobs they would be local and sustainable. Ms. Chalice said that any ideas that promote or further economic development in Keene will likely be heard by the City as that is one of their major goals. Ms. Chalice asked again who will take the presentation to organizations that they contact. Mr. Daloz agreed to spearhead the presentation delivery. Ms. Straughen suggested Mr. Daloz consider the outcome when developing the presentation, for example, showing support for local farmers as an objective. Ms. Chalice said that the presentation could just be showcasing what the AGC does but at the same time it may serve to solicit ideas from other organizations. Chair Wilton said she sees agriculture as a growth area for Keene and referenced Ms. Johnson's presentation from last week. She said Keene is small enough to experiment with urban agriculture which is a global growth area and focusing on this area could make Keene an agricultural center. Mr. Daloz suggested making urban agriculture a bullet point on task list. Committee members all agreed they needed to flesh out the ideas more. Ms. Chalice asked if other members wanted to partner with Mr. Daloz on developing the goals for the presentation and Chair Wilton agreed to partner with Mr. Daloz. Councilor Chadbourne told committee that the Fall Festival planning committee will meet June 28 at 8 am in City Hall, second floor conference room, and they are asking interested parties to come to meeting with a written request. She said the Farmer's Market is already involved. Mr. Florenz agreed to attend that meeting.

Mr. Florenz added that he had a conversation with Sarah Harpster from the Community Kitchen and Jess Gerrior from Antioch about a garden site at the Cheshire Fair Grounds which historically has produced food for the Community Kitchen, had been run by someone with grant funding but the program has now ended. He said they spoke about replacements for that position and they were considering the role Community Garden Connections (CGC) at Antioch could play in taking over a new site more central to Keene (as opposed to the CGC Westmoreland site). Ms. Straughen asked if they are trying to replace the location or the funding. Mr. Florenz said he thinks they are considering both and there is a question about CGC stepping into that role and serving as a fundraiser. He said he is already involved in the conversation and wanted the AGC to be aware in case in the event there is an opportunity for the City to become involved. Chair Wilton asked if they should add an agenda item for next month on this topic and discuss it further. Mr. Florenz agreed to keep the AGC updated so item will be added to next month's agenda.

Mr. Daloz asked again about ways to reach out to larger community and make connections. Mr. Florenz said tabling at the Monadnock Co-Op might reach more people

than the Lyon's Club. Ms. Chalice agreed that the customers at the Co-Op might be more interested in local agriculture. Ms. Straughen talked about the tabling policies at the Co-Op and described certain events where AGC could table such as Earth Day, monthly summer barbecue and farm tours and an August ice cream social for Jeffrey P. Smith Farm Scholarship. Ms. Chalice said Mr. Daloz would first need to create a FAQ brochure, small flyers and posters to set up a table. The committee agreed to add developing promotional materials to the next agenda. Committee also agreed to add Chicken Neighborhood brochure to the agenda for next week.

Ms. Straughen brought up a roundtable event hosted by a group called Breakaway which offers an alternative agricultural spring break experience for students visiting Keene. The event will be held Thursday, July 13 from 6:30-8:30 pm, the day after the next AGC meeting, and she invited AGC members to attend. She also agreed to keep committee updated on event.

6) New or Other Business

None at this time.

7) Next Meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, July 12, at 3:30PM

8) Adjournment

Chair Wilton adjourned the meeting at 4:33 PM.

Respectfully submitted by,
Ayshah Kassamali-Fox, Minute Taker