

City of Keene  
New Hampshire

AGRICULTURAL COMMISSION  
MEETING MINUTES

**Thursday, March 17, 2016**

**3:30 PM**

**2nd Floor Conference Room**

**Members Present:**

Alan Bettler, Chair  
Sarah Wilton, Vice Chair  
Bettina Chadbourne, Councilor  
Charles Daloz  
Mark Florenz, Alternate

**Staff Present:**

Michele Chalice, Planning

**Members Not Present:**

Alison Welsh  
Kathy Harrington  
Marcia Duffy

**1) Call to Order**

Vice Chair Bettler called the meeting to order at 3:30 PM.

**2) Approve February 18, 2016 Minutes**

Ms. Wilton stated that she has a question about protocol for meetings and meeting minutes - to what extent is it appropriate for people to talk about what a City staff member or another person has said (i.e. include "hearsay" in the minutes) instead of inviting that person to come speak to the Agriculture Commission themselves?

Discussion ensued. Ms. Chalice noted that at last month's meeting she talked about what Public Works Assistant Director Donna Hanscom had written in an email, and if the committee wants, she could attach the email verbatim instead. Vice Chair Bettler suggested that if they are quoting someone the meeting minutes should be sent to the person being quoted.

Councilor Chadbourne made a motion to approve the minutes of February 18, 2016, which was seconded by Mr. Daloz. The motion passed by unanimous vote.

**3) Election of Commission Chair and Vice Chair**

Vice Chair Bettler stated that Carl Jacobs left and they need a new Chair and Vice Chair.

Councilor Chadbourne nominated Alan Bettler for Chair. Mr. Florenz seconded the nomination, which Mr. Bettler accepted. The motion passed by unanimous vote.

Councilor Chadbourne nominated Sarah Wilton for Vice Chair. Mr. Daloz seconded the nomination, which Ms. Wilton accepted. Chair Bettler asked if anyone else is interested, and there was no response. Ms. Chalice stated that she has not heard anything from members not present today, regarding a wish to be considered for a position. The motion passed by unanimous vote.

**4) Roe-Ann Tasoulas – Monadnock Farm & Community Coalition**

Chair Bettler stated that they will skip this item and return to it later in the meeting.

**5) Potential Agriculture Commission Goal Amendments to Keene CMP**

Chair Bettler stated that at the last meeting they talked about having an agenda item about proposing to include some type of agriculture goal in the Comprehensive Master Plan (CMP). Ms. Wilton stated that to her the issue is whether they have a theory of what they want to do, or if they have action steps. She continued that she thinks theory comes before action steps. Councilor Chadbourne agreed. Ms. Wilton stated that she thinks what they are really talking about is the issue of food security. There are a lot of components to that. It is not just the availability of food, but food that they know is safe, and having an abundance of food, and having farmers getting parity for their food so they can afford to grow it locally. Chair Bettler and Mr. Daloz agreed. Chair Bettler continued that they are doing things like helping the Farmer's Market, looking at Community Gardens, and so on and so forth. Mr. Florenz replied that the presentation by the Monadnock Farm & Community Coalition (MFCC) will help put words to what she is saying. He continued yes, there are ways that the Agricultural Commission is already helping.

**6) City Parcels/Future Pollinator Habitat Grant Application – Next Steps Forward**

Chair Bettler stated that they were looking at pollinator habitat, which Ms. Chalice got some information on. Ms. Chalice stated that she gave them maps, with prospective community garden sites. She proposes that they could use it as a reference for potential food-growing sites. She gave more information about what is on the map. Discussion ensued. Ms. Chalice continued that the challenge would be finding the property owners that would be willing or interested in growing, in the areas with soils of agricultural importance. Chair Bettler replied that they talked about that; that these could be community gardens or other agriculture sites. He continued that he is not sure if the green areas showing "soils of agricultural importance" is actually helpful for what they are discussing, since much of those areas are paved over or used to be wetlands.

Mr. Florenz stated that it seems like a win/win if they can access the grant money. He continued that these will not be community gardens anytime soon and he does not see any problem with having pollinator habitat in the meantime. Mr. Daloz stated that what Ms. Chalice sent out was a copy of a 2014 grant application. He asked if the proposal is to do another one and sort of copy that one. Mr. Florenz replied yes, and it all goes

through Cheshire County Conservation District (CCCD). Amanda Littleton would make sure there are Keene parcels included if and when she does another grant application.

Chair Bettler stated that he emailed Keene High School's horticulture teacher and he is very interested (in having his students involved with the site across the street from the school.) He continued that the Agriculture Commission could have him come to a meeting. Or, the next step would be to see how Parks and Recreation Director Andy Bohannon feels. Ms. Chalice replied that Chair Bettler, Mr. Bohannon, and the horticulture teacher could sit down for a pre-meeting discussion about the topic. Ms. Wilton stated that it is almost the end of the school year so this should probably be something for the fall. Chair Bettler agreed and added that the teacher might be interested in a bigger project with this field or just the arboring projects. He could take his students there so they could do the work they're already doing, while helping the City in the process. It would benefit everyone. Ms. Chalice stated that earlier, Mr. Daloz had been talking about a project of pruning the fruit trees. She asked if possibly the students could help with this. Mr. Daloz replied possibly. Chair Bettler stated that he will contact Mr. Bohannon and the teacher and see what the next steps are.

Chair Bettler returned to agenda item number four.

**4) Roe-Ann Tasoulas – Monadnock Farm & Community Coalition**

Mr. Florenz stated that the MFCC Director Roe-Ann Tasoulas was going to come but had a conflict, so he, as a Board member, will give the presentation in her place. He shared the coalition's mission statement. He stated that it gets to a lot of what Ms. Wilton was talking about, regarding supporting a sustainable local food system. He continued with the coalition's vision statement. Mr. Daloz stated that the word "local" jumps out at him from the vision statement because they really are not local in the food system.

Mr. Daloz asked if the Agriculture Commission supports this. Mr. Florenz replied that the commission is a member of the coalition, so, yes. He continued that the coalition started in 2006 and really got going in 2013. It began as a way to fill a need. The original stakeholders saw in a lot of different groups in the community working on similar things but not necessarily communicating well. The goal is to bring together those groups with shared missions, and host forums, support collaboration, and so on and so forth.

Ms. Wilton asked what authority the coalition has to implement changes. Mr. Florenz replied that they do not have authority. He continued that they are a nonprofit run through the CCCD. It is not a governing body; it is a coalition of different groups working together and trying to accomplish some of these goals.

Ms. Wilton stated that one thing that is missing from the vision is that food should be humanely raised. Mr. Florenz replied that the MFCC is a very diverse coalition, with groups such as the Humane Society as well as the NH Farm Bureau and those two have not always gotten along. The MFCC does not necessarily want to advocate for or against something like GMOs, because people in the coalition have different viewpoints. They do not want to take too strong of a position on something that would alienate some of the

members. They just want to get everyone talking, gather information, and educate. Discussion ensued about the coalition members.

Mr. Florenz continued the slideshow presentation, reporting that the MSCC has 58 member organizations. He spoke about some of the activities the coalition does, such as having food access forums, film festivals, and tabling at events such as “Urban Farming.” Keene Housing Authority is a member and there is a lot of discussion about improving low income communities’ access to local food, and the barriers to that.

Mr. Florenz continued that they also have Policy Advocacy Forums, which he is involved with. The focus is on educating people about what is going on in the policy realm and what the drivers are. He spoke about what a past summit was like. He continued that this fall they will be talking about local land use regulations. They will educate people on different ways that the regulations come into play regarding farms, e.g. via the Planning Board, Zoning Board, and so on and so forth.

Mr. Florenz continued that Food Production Forums are focused more specifically on farmers. They gather local farmers to show appreciation for them and give them an opportunity to talk together about various topics. The MFCC also has Education Forums about topics such as the importance of eating local, healthy food. The film festivals they host are to raise general awareness of the group and provide education on a variety of topics. Ms. Chalice replied that they are very entertaining as well as informative.

Mr. Florenz continued that the MSCC has working groups that meet monthly, such as the Policy Working Group, Education Working Group, and Infrastructure Working Group. The latter one talks about topics such as the need for a commercial community kitchen, more cold storage, and more meat processing facilities. If anyone here wants to participate they would love more input.

Mr. Florenz continued that there are possible areas for advocacy that would specifically be of interest to the Agriculture Commission. He continued that some they already do, like supporting community gardens and the farmers market.

Ms. Chalice asked what Monadnock Menus is. Mr. Florenz replied that it is hard for big institutions like Cheshire Medical Center to buy directly from farms, so Monadnock Menus consolidates a lot of the individual farms and gives big institutions a place where they can get a lot of their food needs met. Chair Bettler replied that Monadnock Menus has refrigerated trucks, which is helpful. Ms. Wilton noted that the slide says Cheshire Medical Center only gets 2% of its food locally, and that is not very much. Brief discussion ensued about the possible reasons why.

Ms. Wilton asked if the Agriculture Commission can have access to those slides. Ms. Chalice replied that she will send it to them right now. Chair Bettler added that a lot of it is on the MFCC website, too.

Chair Bettler and the committee thanked Mr. Florenz for his presentation. Chair Bettler stated that this is helpful, as they look at language for the CMP. He asked what their next step is for getting an amendment proposed.

Ms. Chalice replied that there have been no amendments. She continued that the joint committee of the Planning Board and Planning, Licenses, and Development Committee has been charged with creating an implementation plan for the CMP. The question is whether the implementation plan would need to be an amendment to the CMP. The Planning Department does not know and they are researching that, and could also look into what the Agriculture Commission is talking about. She will find out what their options are. The Planning Department is not in the position to revise or update the entire CMP, which would be ideally done every five years, but they do need to look at what the process would be, logistically and municipally, to amend it. She will come back with more information.

Chair Bettler asked if they should draft something at this point. Ms. Chalice replied yes, they can, and whatever they come up with will push the issue. She continued that the conundrum will be that whatever the Agriculture Commission proposes will not have gone through the extensive public input process and the rest of the plan went through. The question is how to add content to a document that represents all of that public input.

Mr. Daloz stated that “increase local food security” or “find out how much is already local” or something similar is already in the CMP. Ms. Wilton replied that she went through the CMP and did not see that.

Mr. Daloz stated that he was thinking of the matrix that the Antioch University New England (AUNE) students put together. Ms. Chalice replied that that was a Cities for Climate Protection Committee (CCP) project that AUNE students helped with. They generated a list of priorities for the CCP to work on. That was completely independent of the CMP. Mr. Daloz asked if they can be joined. Ms. Chalice replied no. Discussion continued. Chair Bettler stated that some of the language in the matrix came from an MFCC policy meeting.

Ms. Wilton asked what the Agriculture Commission’s next steps are for proposing an addition to the CMP. She asked if they should look at the matrix. Chair Bettler replied that they can each do that individually and come up with a proposed recommendation to talk about at the next meeting, but it is tricky for them to meet outside of these meetings. Ms. Chalice replied that they could create a [working group] for this or schedule a retreat. Chair Bettler asked about the time frame, and what stage the implementation plan is in. Ms. Chalice replied that the implementation plan will happen over the next couple months, but what the Agriculture Commission is talking about doing is completely separate from that.

Chair Bettler suggested that one of them write something up with the language from the matrix as a recommendation. He asked if they want to create a working group or talk about this at next meeting. Ms. Wilton and Mr. Daloz replied that they will work on it.

Mr. Daloz asked if the communication would go to the joint committee, and if it should say what the Agriculture Commission thinks is important. Mr. Florenz replied that he thinks it should say what the commission thinks the CMP is lacking. Chair Bettler agreed. He continued that they should look at the CMP to make sure they're making an appropriate recommendation.

Ms. Chalice suggested they come back with the comments at the next meeting. Chair Bettler thanked Ms. Wilton and Mr. Daloz for working on this. Ms. Wilton asked for another copy of the matrix. Ms. Chalice replied that she'll send it again. Chair Bettler stated that doing this legwork can serve the commission in other ways, too - the information can be something to add to the trifold.

#### **7) Agriculture Commission Table at Open Space Event in April**

Ms. Chalice stated that time is getting short for preparing for the event. She continued that if they send her content/information, by uploading it to the drop box (which she showed a template of), she can plug it in and printed out into trifold size and attach it to a board. Group members can assign themselves topics.

Chair Bettler asked who will attend the event. Mr. Daloz and Ms. Wilton replied that they can go. Chair Bettler replied that he can, too.

Discussion ensued about content for the trifold. Ideas generated included:

- \* The commission's charge
- \* Contact information of commission members (which members present gave Ms. Chalice permission to include)
- \* Maps (Mr. Daloz asked about having the map Ms. Chalice showed them today, and she said she'd look into it)
- \* Statements about the commission's projects
- \* The AUNE report about community gardens (or maybe the executive summary) and/or other reports from the MFCC
- \* Local food samples
- \* A half page of resources, as a handout
- \* The slide Mr. Florenz just presented, about the MFCC's advocacy work (or "goals" or "ideas")
- \* A sign-up sheet for community gardens
- \* A handout about community gardens

Chair Bettler stated that the event will occur before the Agriculture Commission's next meeting. He asked Ms. Chalice to clarify what she will do and what the commission members need to do. Ms. Chalice replied that she cannot personally do the project, but she can plug in content that members send her. She will create a draft, using the members' content, and send it to Chair Bettler for approval, to either print it into a trifold, or not. It will be his call.

#### **8) New or Other Business**

Mr. Florenz reported that he raises pigs and is looking into the possibility of selling the frozen meat from his property, after it has been processed and frozen elsewhere. He continued that this would require a City health inspection. There is a \$200 annual fee for that, even though his inspection would require nothing more than making sure the freezer has the meat sufficiently frozen. He has been talking with the Code Enforcement Department. One idea for the Agriculture Commission to consider is proposing that the City have a subcategory within the health inspection form that has a smaller fee for specific incidences/smaller operations. The Agriculture Commission could draft a letter that goes to the City Council.

Ms. Chalice replied that if they want to do this, they will be requesting an ordinance change. Discussion ensued. Mr. Daloz asked what the ordinance says. Ms. Chalice replied that she will send it to them. Councilor Chadbourne suggested they have the City's health inspector, John Rogers, come talk with them. Chair Bettler replied that they will put this topic on the agenda for the next meeting. Councilor Chadbourne suggested that they direct Ms. Chalice to invite Mr. Rogers. Chair Bettler agreed. Mr. Daloz replied that it would help if Ms. Chalice could also send the commission some information beforehand so they can be prepared. Discussion ensued about who will invite John Rogers. Mr. Florenz stated that he will.

Chair Bettler stated that he might not be able to make it to the next meeting or two on time, and suggested they try for another meeting time. He continued that maybe Ms. Chalice can send a Doodle poll so they can schedule it.

Mr. Daloz asked if they have resolved what they want to do about pollinator habitat. Chair Bettler replied no. Councilor Chadbourne asked if they should talk about that at the next meeting. Chair Bettler replied yes. Mr. Daloz asked if they can make sure they are on Ms. Littleton's list for the next round of grants. Mr. Florenz replied that Ms. Chalice could tell her the Agriculture Commission is interested. Chair Bettler replied that he will put this on the next agenda.

Councilor Chadbourne asked if the commission received, via email, the document that Mr. Daloz wrote with considerations for the Agriculture Commission. Mr. Daloz asked if he should send it again, and Ms. Wilton replied yes. Councilor Chadbourne suggested they ask Ms. Chalice to send it again.

**9) Next Meeting – Thursday, April 21, 2016**

**10) Adjournment**

Hearing no further business, Chair Bettler adjourned the meeting at 4:47 PM.

Respectfully submitted by,  
Britta Reida, Minute Taker