

City of Keene
New Hampshire

AGRICULTURAL COMMISSION
MEETING MINUTES

Thursday, June 16, 2016

3:30 PM

2nd Floor Conference Room

Members Present:

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

Staff Present:

Michele Chalice, Planning

Members Not Present:

Bettina Chadbourne, Councilor
Alison Welsh
Kathy Harrington
Marcia Duffy

1) Call to Order

Chair Bettler called the meeting to order at 3:32 PM.

2) Approve April 21, 2016 Minutes and December 2015 minutes

Mr. Florenz made a motion for the Agriculture Commission to approve the minutes of December 2015. Mr. Daloz seconded the motion, which passed by unanimous vote.

Mr. Daloz made a motion for the Agriculture Commission to approve the April 21, 2016 minutes. Mr. Florenz seconded the motion, which passed by unanimous vote.

3) Status of Request to Planning, Licenses, and Development/Planning Board Committee to consider creating a new Food License Class

Chair Bettler asked for an update. Mr. Florenz stated that last week he and Ms. Chalice explained the (Agriculture Commission's request) to the Planning, Licenses, and Development (PLD) Committee. He continued that everyone seemed to be in agreement with the idea; it was a question of City procedure, and how to get this implemented. There are more steps to come; it is underway.

Ms. Chalice reported that Mr. Florenz did a great job presenting. She continued that they talked about the fact that they are a self-regulating community. She wished they had talked about the equity topic – someone in Swanzey can do this (get a food license) for \$100 whereas in Keene it costs \$200. Councilor Chadbourne was there and she was a strong voice advocating for this. Now it is up to Code Enforcement Director John Rogers. It looked like a one-line change to the licensing language. That is the

information she will give to Mr. Rogers in the packet. She does not know how the Agriculture Commission will follow the process from that point forward, since Mr. Rogers does not come to these meetings. The PLD Committee members started talking about other potential changes, and the City Manager told them that these licenses had just been revised in recent years, so luckily, they did not go down the path of needing to examine the whole licensing topic. Mr. Rogers will present to the City Council.

Mr. Florenz asked if it has to go back to the PLD Committee. Discussion continued. Ms. Chalice stated that they did not hear any concerns from PLD Committee members that might torpedo this. In fact, Councilor Chadbourne suggested a lower fee than the Agriculture Commission had suggested. Mr. Florenz replied that Mr. Rogers will do an estimate of how much time and effort it takes his staff. Ms. Wilton asked where to find the City Council agendas. Ms. Chalice explained.

Mr. Florenz asked Ms. Chalice to keep them updated, if she hears about when the licensing topic will come before the City Council again. Ms. Chalice agreed and encouraged committee members to attend if possible. She spoke about how much of an impact members of the public can have by coming to speak at meetings – more than they might expect. Discussion ensued.

Chair Bettler asked if they were looking at it under class 3. Mr. Florenz replied that they are proposing adding a class 6. Ms. Chalice noted that the handout she gave to the Agriculture Commission should say “draft.” It is a draft showing what it could look like. Chair Bettler stated that they do not have to change the language of class 3 to add class 6. Ms. Chalice replied that they might take off the line in class 3 about frozen products.

4) Status of Drafting Agriculture Commission Goal Amendments to Keene’s Comprehensive Master Plan (CMP)

Chair Bettler stated that he saw a note in the minutes from April that the CMP takes a ten-year process to revise. Ms. Chalice replied that there are no current plans to revise it. She continued that anything from the Agriculture Commission would be presented to the Chair of the joint committee (of the PLD and Planning Board) as an amendment. This has not happened yet. She cannot predict how such a proposal would be received. The other way to go about it is to create a Master Plan just for the Agriculture Commission. She recommends trying the first method first.

Ms. Wilton stated that she and Mr. Daloz met and talked about possible ways to do this. She continued that there are places in the CMP where agriculture is omitted and it is a no-brainer that it should be in there. She made a list of places in the CMP where agriculture could be. The absence of urban agriculture is conspicuous. The Agriculture Commission was created after the creation of the CMP. She and Mr. Daloz thought that to make it more user-friendly and to communicate their ideas in a format that could later be used as a supplement to the CMP, they could create a briefing of the concept, maybe with photos, present it here, and then present it to the joint committee. There is more “cannon fodder” out there - a lot of voices within and around Keene that could contribute to such a

concept. They looked carefully at the bullet points, in the notes that Ms. Chalice gave them. It is consistent with what many voices around Keene have already been saying.

Ms. Wilton read a short passage from the Greening Cities book, by Joan Roelofs, who taught Political Science at Keene State College (KSC), regarding ideas about transforming residential lawns into places where food and edible plants grow. She continued that the Agriculture Commission does not say “rural” or “urban.” She thinks it should be both. They need to promote rural agriculture and be concerned with the farmer’s market, but there is also a place for urban agriculture and Keene has the talent to pursue that. There are resources, and there is a need. They hear all the time that Keene needs jobs. Maybe there is no magic factory coming. Why not incorporate the concept of urban agriculture? It would be a good way to grow jobs around Keene’s culture. Urban agriculture is a growth area internationally.

Chair Bettler replied that they have had similar discussions here before, such as about the concept of green roofs. Regarding addressing this as an amendment in the CMP he is not sure. Ms. Chalice asked if someone wanted to make a motion regarding the Agriculture Commission pursuing this presentation/proposed CMP amendment. She continued that for more “cannon fodder,” a presentation at a recent conference given by the NH Department of Agriculture was about agro-tourism. The City Council is all about economic development right now. Agro-tourism is growing in Keene – tourists come to farms to participate in farm activities, and are likely to also spend money on lodging, food, gas, etc. in the area. She will send the presentation to the commission. It has suggestions on how farms can handle agro-tourism. It is enough of a topic right now where it could gain traction and they could have a case for making an amendment to the CMP. Between those two items, what the Agriculture Commission started to draw up and the notes from the CMP meetings, they have the material. It needs to be in written form, not just a table. Discussion ensued on a possible motion.

Mr. Florenz made a motion for the Agriculture Commission to create proposed amendments to the Comprehensive Master Plan that highlight the importance of local agriculture. Mr. Daloz seconded the motion.

Ms. Chalice asked if Ms. Wilton and Mr. Daloz will draft the proposed amendments. Mr. Daloz asked what her role/involvement is. Ms. Chalice replied that the Agriculture Commission needs to make the case to the joint committee that it is a good idea. If the joint committee agrees, they would likely make a motion to have City staff assist the Agriculture Commission with it.

Mr. Florenz asked if the Agriculture Commission is writing the proposed changes. Ms. Chalice replied that they are making the case, and it would be strongest if they had some suggested material. Mr. Florenz replied that they have some ideas on paper already. He asked if Mr. Daloz and Ms. Wilton can come back with this at the next meeting. Ms. Chalice replied that it has to be in a concise, written format – maybe a presentation with images. She continued that she recommends the presentation include information about the timing (i.e. that the CMP was created before the Agriculture Commission), minutes

from the CMP process that talk about the importance of agriculture, and why the Agriculture Commission thinks these amendments are a good idea.

Mr. Florenz replied yes, they should say why local agriculture is important, why it was not fully considered when the CMP was created, and what they think are the areas in the CMP in which agriculture is missing. Discussion continued. Mr. Daloz stated that reading the excerpts from meeting minutes when the CMP was being created, he noticed that at that time, people had a lot of good ideas that are mostly the same as the ideas the Agriculture Commission now has, except the Agriculture Commission hadn't yet been created. Discussion continued and Ms. Chalice gave more information about the joint committee, which is the body that deals with the CMP's implementation.

Chair Bettler asked Ms. Wilton if she wants to include that excerpt from Greening Cities in the presentation. Ms. Wilton replied no, it is just conceptual/inspirational, and a short part of a longer passage. Ms. Chalice suggested using a quote from it with a nice photo.

Ms. Chalice stated that the next joint committee meeting is July 11, which does not give the commission enough time to prepare. Discussion ensued about the timing and the process. Ms. Chalice recommended that the commission decide on/approve a presentation at their July 21 meeting, which would give her enough time to get it on the agenda for the August 8 meeting of the joint committee. Ms. Wilton stated that an idea she and Mr. Daloz had was to propose this as appendix to the CMP if the joint committee does not agree with having it be an amendment. Mr. Florenz replied that it will great for them to go on record with this presentation, regardless of what happens.

Discussion continued about the timing. Ms. Chalice stated that she would need the information on July 12 – a draft presentation in whatever format Ms. Wilton and Mr. Daloz decide is important, or whoever else is a part of a working group/subcommittee. Mr. Daloz asked if it could be through email. Ms. Chalice replied that she recommends they meet in person, and take notes about their conversation, to bring back to the whole committee. She continued that if this does not work out like this they can adjust the dates and present to the joint committee another time.

Mr. Daloz distributed copies of a document Ms. Wilton gave them as a resource – “Sustaining Agriculture in the Granite State.” Ms. Wilton stated that she sees this as the rationale for having an Agriculture Commission. She continued that the document says that every city in NH should have Agriculture Commissions and outlines what the commissions should do. Chair Bettler and Mr. Daloz agreed that it is good to know that others are doing this, and that others are saying what the Agriculture Commission is saying. Ms. Wilton stated that the document has recommendations for what to do on a statewide as well as local level.

Chair Bettler asked if Ms. Chalice will send a Doodle poll so they can schedule a working group meeting to work on this presentation. Ms. Chalice replied yes, and discussion ensued about people's schedules and availability, and where to meet. They decided on the Monadnock Food Co op café. Ms. Chalice asked if everyone has the

handout with the excerpts from the CMP meetings that pertain to agriculture. Discussion ensued and Ms. Chalice stated that she will send it out to everyone again.

5) Creation of Agriculture Commission Resource Webpage

Ms. Chalice asked if Ms. Wilton sent her a list. Ms. Wilton replied yes, two pages. Ms. Chalice replied that she will put that on the commission's website, as a drop-down menu with "Resources." Mr. Florenz stated that the Monadnock Farm and Community Coalition (MFCC) was trying to be a similar source of information and resources. Maybe they could link the city website to that, and the commission can give feedback to MFCC and suggestions of what to add. Ms. Wilton stated that the paper has regional and national links to other groups, and the MFCC is one of those.

Chair Bettler asked how they decide which resource to put up. Ms. Chalice replied that she will bring a draft and they can mark it up. Mr. Daloz suggested that MFCC, if they have a list, be one of the primary 'co-authors' or something similar. He wants them to see the MFCC list. Mr. Florenz replied that it is on the agenda for Monday's meeting of the MFCC's Policy Working Group. Ms. Chalice asked him to talk with that group about this and how it would work best. She continued that if he sends the agenda information to her she will send it out to the Agriculture Commission. She asked if it would be helpful to have commission members attend. Mr. Florenz replied that he will be there, and it is open, and they welcome anyone who wants to attend. It is Monday, June 20, at 3:30 at the Co op.

6) New or Other Business

Chair Bettler stated that he read in the April minutes that there was a conversation about how the commission communicates with the MFCC. Mr. Florenz replied that the Policy Working Group was trying to update their list of agriculture commissions in the region and had an outdated list of members for Keene's. He updated that list and put Ms. Chalice down as the contact person. If individual members from the commission want to be on the mailing list they can add themselves. The MFCC is looking for more engagement. The policy forums, specifically, seem like a good opportunity to engage the agriculture commissions. They were trying to figure out who is out there and what they are doing and how the MFCC could better serve as a resource for them. Chair Bettler asked, what if there is an individual who wants to contact the Agriculture Commission? Ms. Chalice replied that it would go to her and she would send the message out to the whole group.

Chair Bettler asked if it is official that Alison Welsh is not a member anymore. Ms. Chalice replied yes, she submitted her resignation to the Mayor. She continued that she recommends Chair Bettler contact Kathy Harrington and Marcia Duffy to ask if they are still interested in being members. Chair Bettler asked if Mr. Florenz could move up to a full member. Ms. Chalice replied that it would make the most sense to put all of the membership information to the Mayor at once. Chair Bettler replied that he will contact Ms. Duffy and Ms. Harrington first then.

Ms. Wilton asked if they should be telling other people about openings on this commission. Ms. Chalice replied yes, and then they can recommend names to the Mayor. Chair Bettler replied that the first steps are to talk with Ms. Duffy and Ms. Harrington and move Mr. Florenz up to a full member, and see from there. Ms. Chalice replied that she can email the Mayor right off the bat about filling Ms. Welsh's position with Mr. Florenz.

Chair Bettler asked if this meeting date and time is still good for everyone. Discussion ensued. The group decided to keep meeting on the third Thursdays at 3:30 PM.

Mr. Daloz stated that there is much better participation this year with the community gardens that the Parks & Recreation Department hosts at Monadnock View Cemetery, and the AUNE program has done a great job with community gardens also. Mr. Florenz thanked him for being involved in that and stated that it is great to have someone from the Agriculture Commission involved. Mr. Daloz stated that they might begin to think about some sort of recognition for people doing interesting things, like having the Agriculture Commission send a "nice job on ____" note to Mr. Bohannon at the end of the season or the person from AUNE.

Ms. Chalice reported that NH Housing just hired a Community Gardens Coordinator to coordinate the gardens at five of their sites in the City. She continued that it is wildly exciting to have a person coordinating these gardens and the ordering of organic foods from the coalition of organic gardens on a regular basis, for seniors and people in subsidized housing. The Coordinator is also helping a group of children, through NH Housing, do gardening. It was a very full job description that she was delighted to see. They might warrant a note of appreciation and encouragement, also. Keene has never seen anything like this before.

Mr. Daloz stated that he went to a meeting at a low-income housing community down by Ashuelot River Park. He continued that a woman was giving residents bags of seeds and they were asking lots of questions. It might have been this Coordinator who was just hired. It was beautifully done and he was impressed. It may be something for them to think about towards the fall, little certificates of recognition or something similar. Ms. Chalice replied that the Agriculture Commission could even host a potluck meal if they wanted to, to go along with the thank yous. Chair Bettler replied that he agrees with the idea of acknowledging and thanking these people.

7) Next Meeting

Chair Bettler reported that the next meeting is July 21 at 3:30 PM. Ms. Chalice stated that she will do a Doodle poll to schedule the working group meeting.

8) Adjournment

Hearing no further business, Chair Bettler adjourned the meeting at 4:39 PM.

Respectfully submitted by
Britta Reida, Minute-taker

