

City of Keene
New Hampshire

AGRICULTURAL COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES

Thursday, January 15, 2015

3:30 PM

2nd Floor Conference Room

Members Present:

Councilor Carl Jacobs, Chair
Mark Florenz, Alternate
Allison Welsh
Alan Bettler
Sarah Wilton

Staff Present:

Michele Chalice, Planner

Members Not Present:

Marcia Duffy
Dr. Eleanor Vander Haegen, Vice Chair

Others Present:

Galagher Hannan,
Greenspace Project
Ken Stewart, Greenspace Project
Bill Foshier, Keene Farmer's Market

1. Call to Order/Roll Call-

Chair Jacobs called the meeting to order at 3:31 PM. Roll call was conducted.

2. Minutes of Previous Meeting- December 11, 2014

Mr. Florenz made a motion to approve the minutes of December 11, 2014. Ms. Welsh seconded the motion which carried unanimously.

3. Presentation by Galagher Hannan of the Ashuelot Greenspace Project-

Chair Jacobs stated that the committee has been communicating about both the farmer's market and Greenspace. He continued, stating that the committee has been assisting the farmer's market with finding a permanent location and the committee is here to facilitate the discussion. Gallagher Hannon currently works at Greenspace and has been looking at the Ashuelot River site for different uses. The idea of the farmer's market came up. This proposed lot, which is 3.5 acres, was an overflow parking lot for the Colony Mill Mall and was not utilized. Ms. Hannon stated that the site was bought by private citizens to turn it into a green space for the community.

Ms. Hannon turns the committee's attention to the power point showcasing the parking lot. She reported that the location is set in between several areas, including the Ashuelot Park, residential homes, and a commercial area. She pointed out that the boat launch is nearby and residents requested the use of the lot for a boat launch use. The Jonathan Daniels Bike trail is also alongside this lot. Ms. Hannon stated that the lot is very accessible to residents. She continued, stating that an analysis was conducted and routes were mapped out. Ms. Hannon stated that it is a half mile from the downtown area, there are several parking areas, and it covers a large area within a two mile biking area. The lot also has several biking paths that intersect. Ms. Hannon stated that the Keene master plan was reviewed and a community meeting with stakeholders was conducted where the farmer's market was addressed. Ms. Hannon reported that Greenspace met with the farmer's market representatives in the spring and criteria was then created. She continued, stating that criteria included a pavilion, bathrooms, water and power, event space, storage, and parking. Ms. Hannon stated that 50 spots have been designated.

Ms. Hannon reported that she looked outside of Keene for case studies of destination farmer's markets. She continued, stating that Brattleboro has a very successful market outside the center along with Ithaca. Ms. Hannon stated that after research was conducted, the vision for the space is to have a green space by the Ashuelot River, a recreation hub, a natural playground from natural materials instead of metal, and a community event space which will include the farmer's market. Ms. Hannon reported that ecological value would also be a priority. Ms. Hannon showcased the design on the screen. She stated that the design would be centered logistically around the playground. She continued, stating that the farmer's market would be on the southern side of the lot and parking space would be available on the North-East and Eastern sides.

Ms. Welsh asked if the trees will be native and if there will be access for electricity. Ms. Hannon stated that the trees will be native and there is power running up Ashuelot Street so electricity would be possible. Ms. Welsh asked where the event and stage area would be. Ms. Hannon replied that it would be near the pavilion. Ms. Welsh asked about possible senior housing on the lot. Mr. Kenneth Stewart of 11 Algonquin Drive in Keene stated that there was an idea to add housing to the South side of Ashuelot Court, but the 100 year flood line goes to the corner of the lot and they did not feel confident building anything inside the lot. Mr. Stewart stated that the housing would also cramp the design with only two or three units fitting in the lot.

Chair Jacobs asked about the dimensions of the pavilion area. Ms. Hannon stated that the pavilion would be 120 by 140 feet. Mr. Foshier stated that during the peak season of the farmer's market there will be about 26- 30 vendors. Chair Jacobs asked about the dimensions of the vendor's tents. Ms. Hannon stated that the tents are about 10 by 10 feet. She continued, stating that there would be two rows of vendors which could fit about 24 tents. Ms. Hannon stated that everyone may not need ten feet however. She reported that the size of the pavilion is still under discussion. Mr. Foshier stated that vendors are able to set up outside as well. He continued, stating that if the market grows, the issue would then be addressed.

Mr. Fosher stated that currently the market is in a busy lot and the new model would be more family friendly with the playground and picnic tables. Chair Jacobs asked about the trucks setting up to stock the tents. Ms. Hannon turned the committee's attention to the slide and stated that there will be accessibility with a specific parking lot for vendors. She continued, stating that the vendors on the northern side would not have direct car access but the southern side would. Ms. Hannon stated that this compromise was made to ensure the pavilion is a part of the space. Ms. Hannon stated that there is visitor parking on the north-east side which would allow up to 56 spots. She continued, stating that solar panels have also been discussed on the southern side of the lot.

Ms. Welsh asked if there is space for a community garden. Ms. Hannon stated that there are other community gardens around the town but an idea was discussed for edible planting. Ms. Wilton asked about handicap access. Ms. Hannon stated that it is a flat site and there should not be a problem with getting wheel chairs to the pavilion. Ms. Wilton asked about specifically handicap parking spots. Mr. Fosher stated that the parking is not a great distance to the space. Ms. Hannon stated that the idea was to have handicap parking in the southern side visitor's lot which is about 200 feet. She continued, stating that if handicap parking needed to be closer, the pavilion parking lot is a possibility. Mr. Fosher stated that currently the farmers market's stands are on the curb and those that are in wheelchairs are unable to join. He continued, stating that having a handicap accessible market is important.

Ms. Welsh asked about the lighting issues for the night market. Mr. Fosher stated that they may just have weeknight markets. He continued, stating that at the Colony Mill, the market took place from 3 pm to 7 pm where lighting was not an issue. Mr. Fosher stated that there would be less city restrictions at the new location. Mr. Florenz asked about a possible winter market or a three season market. Mr. Fosher stated that not many people would come out for winter markets. Ms. Welsh asked about bathroom access. Ms. Hannon stated that there may be compost toilets or possibly toilets with plumbing.

Ms. Hannon reported concerns that were raised about this project. She continued, stating that people were worried about the market being unnoticeable from the street and the pavilion not being large enough. Ms. Hannon stated that another design is to have two smaller pavilions with an interior court yard allowing cars access. Ms. Hannon stated that solar panels were discussed on top of the pavilions. She continued, stating that many residents discussed the possibility of renting out the pavilion. Ms. Hannon stated that a sign in downtown can alert people to the market's presence.

Amanda Littleton of 20 Horseshoe Road, Chesterfield from the Cheshire County Conservation District asked about a food preparation space. Ms. Hannon stated that currently the farmer's market does not allow food preparation because there is no running water or electricity. Ms. Hannon reported that there would only be a hand washing station.

Mr. Fosher stated that electric hookups were discussed for vendors. He continued, stating that a food truck really only needs electricity and water access, although a food truck may not be a high value at the market. Ms. Wilton asked why having the market downtown is a priority specifically because of the limited parking. Ms. Hannon agreed and stated that this was a

concern with the public. Mr. Fosher stated that this move could be a concern for long-time vendors. He continued, stating that although not many people are aware of the farmer's market, those that do know it will expect the market downtown. Mr. Fosher stated that within the first few years there will most likely be a period of adjustment and lower sales at first. He continued, stating that if it is better in the long run to move the market then it should be done. Mr. Fosher stated that the dedicated customers will follow. He continued, stating that not many people stumble across the market and in a sense it is already a destination market.

Ms. Welsh asked if some vendors would move into the Ashuelot Park area or the Arboretum. Mr. Fosher stated that the Parks and Recreation Department did not want this to occur. He continued, stating that it is governed by its own board and the Parks and Recreation Department does not want the grass to be disturbed. Mr. Fosher stated that the vendors could spread out in the green space however.

Ms. Hannon stated that there was another idea of the project being phased and to set up the farmer's market now and decide on a pavilion after a trial run. She continued, stating that parking can also then be discussed including the bank parking lot nearby. Ms. Hannon stated that renting out the pavilion could also bring revenue to the city. Chair Jacobs asked if the city will own this space.

Mr. Stewart stated that the ownership of the land would be transitioned to the city. He continued, stating that the phasing model should first be utilized for a while before deciding on a pavilion design. Ms. Welsh stated that a pavilion would not be a large cost and would be very inviting at a farmer's market. Mr. Stewart stated that these questions need to be addressed and the design is not finished. Chair Jacobs asked about a time frame. Mr. Stewart stated that up until this point gathering information and community outreach has been the focus. He continued, stating that now a full implementation phase will be discussed.

Mr. Fosher stated that the agreement between the city and the market will be a huge factor and there will be a vote whether or not to move. Mr. Fosher reported that renting the lot from Colony Mill is almost \$2,000 a year. He continued, stating that it is an annual agreement and it is never a definite spot for the market. Ms. Welsh asked what the fee would be for the new lot. Mr. Hannon stated that it is unknown at the time but there will be an upkeep fee for the city. He stated that the Brattleboro market has each vendor doing specific hours of work instead of paying. Ms. Welsh asked if the Friends of Open Spaces would oversee the space for the city to ensure things are running correctly. Mr. Stewart stated that the governance needs to be worked out. He continued, stating that the Ashuelot River Park Advisory Board may do it but he is unsure. Mr. Stewart stated that the Friends of Open Spaces was a nonprofit but the status is now changing.

Mr. Stewart stated that there may be an advisory board for the whole space or a separate one for the lot in question. Chair Jacobs stated that the library has two separate boards with one raising funds. Mr. Stewart agreed that there are models like that and it would have to be discussed further.

Mr. Fosher stated that he did research on other farmer's markets and their city relationship. He continued, stating that Keene is the only market that pays rent to the city for space. Mr. Fosher reported that other markets function from donated space or as a city function. Mr. Fosher stated that there are positive things the city does like having the farmers market be a licensed food service entity. He continued, stating that the city can be doing much more to help the farmer's market, including an affordable and stable location.

Ms. Welsh asked about the market's standards and if vendors have to grow their own food. She continued, stating that if vendors sell prepared food it would change the standard.

Mr. Fosher stated that it is not a bridge they had to cross because it was not feasible at the current location. He continued, stating that there would not be any food trucks if they had to grow everything. Chair Jacobs stated that some vendors make chutney which is not grown from their garden. Mr. Fosher stated that the farmer's market did not want to have a food truck that for instance served frozen french fries. He continued, stating that the chutney lady is the sort of food truck that would be accepted. It is a balance.

Mr. Florenz asked about giving some control over to the city and wondered if the vendors be against it. Mr. Fosher stated that many would be against it. Mr. Florenz stated that there would be some benefits from this. Mr. Fosher stated that vendors would leave if the bylaws changed drastically but it is not ruled out. He continued, stating that having a professional running the market has advantages.

Chair Jacobs stated that the plan is very exciting and it is clear that the farmer's market and the Greenspace Project have been communicating. Mr. Fosher stated that he appreciated the committee listening and keeping the city government aware of the farmer's market. Chair Jacobs asked if the fee for the city should be reconsidered. He continued, stating that if Mr. Fosher feels strongly about this, he would encourage him to bring it up with the city.

Chair Jacobs asked if there is a copy of the presentation. Ms. Chalice asked if people have received the slides via email. Mr. Florenz stated that the presentation has newer slides than the presentation that was sent out. Ms. Hannon stated that she will email Ms. Chalice the presentation.

4. New or Other Business

6. Next Meeting – February 12, 2015 at 3:30PM

7. Adjournment

Chair Jacobs adjourned the meeting at 4:33.

Respectfully submitted by:

Lana C. Bluege, Minute-taker
January 15, 2015

