

City of Keene
New Hampshire

AGRICULTURAL COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES

Thursday, December 17, 2015 3:30 PM City Hall, Second Floor Conference Room

Members Present

Councilor Carl Jacobs, Chair
Sarah Wilton
Charles Daloz
Alan Bettler
Alison Welsh
Mark Florenz, Alternate

Staff Present

Michele Chalice, Planner

Members Not Present

Marcia Duffy
Kathy Harrington

Others Present

1. Call to Order

Chair Jacobs called the meeting to order at 3:33 PM.

2. Minutes of Previous Meeting: November 19, 2015

Mr. Florenz made a motion to accept the minutes with the following corrections. Ms. Wilton seconded the motion which carried unanimously.

Ms. Wilton stated that on pg. 4 it reads, “Ms. Wilton stated concern with having prepared foods and taking away from the produce section.” This should instead read, “Ms. Wilton stated concern with prepared foods competing with the mission of the farmer’s market selling produce.”

Ms. Wilton stated that on pg. 2 it reads, “Mr. Bohannon noted that the grant in discussion came through in an email and he had contact Ms. Littleton.” This should instead read, “Mr. Bohannon noted that the grant in discussion came through in an email and he had contacted Ms. Littleton.” Ms. Wilton stated that on pg. 2 it reads, “Chair Jacobs restated that getting an inventory of the parcels in discussion if the first step.” This should instead read, “Chair Jacobs restated that getting an inventory of the parcels in discussion is the first step.”

Mr. Daloz stated that on pg. 1 it reads, “This section is roughly 20 acres.” This should instead read, “Bent Court is roughly 20 acres.”

The Committee discussed the formatting and specifics of the minutes at length to determine if more detailed minutes were favored. Mr. Florenz stated that the minutes should reflect the meaning of the meeting and verbatim is not necessary. He continued, stating concern about discussing specific parties when they are not present like the farmer’s market. Chair Jacobs stated that all Committee Members should be mindful of what they say at the meeting because this is a public forum. Ms. Welsh stated that as the Committee determines their mission, parties and groups will be discussed before they are invited to the meeting.

Mr. Florenz stated that the minutes can be taken in a different way when read as opposed to being present during the meeting. Chair Jacobs stated that this allows for an opportunity for Committee Members to explain the meaning behind their statements if someone questions the minutes and wording.

3. City Parcels/Hay Field Leases-Draft Map Review & Discussion

Ms. Chalice stated that she was under the impression that Mr. Bohannon would be at the meeting. Due to his absence Ms. Chalice gave a brief overview.

Ms. Chalice referred to the map that was handed out covering potential parcels for agricultural use. She stated that three possible parcels are highlighted and Bent Court should be included but is not highlighted. Ms. Chalice stated that these parcels were discussed with Mr. Bohannon and are usually under contract for haying. She continued, stating that these parcels were requested for the Agricultural Committee to discuss before any other parcels were selected.

Ms. Chalice stated that Mr. Bohannon noted that the bridge at Bent Court should be discussed as well including access issues at Stern Hill. She continued, stating that Mr. Bohannon is open to other utilities for the parcels if agriculture is not an option such as habitat for bees or wildflowers. Ms. Chalice stated that it is best for Mr. Bohannon to discuss the parcels in depth when he is available.

Mr. Bettler asked if there was discussion about the Horticulture Club at Keene High School utilizing the space. Chair Jacobs stated that Mr. Bohannon is looking for any ideas at this point. Mr. Daloz suggested children’s after school programs utilizing the fields for produce. Mr. Florenz asked if the after school program has done anything besides ornamentals. Mr. Bettler did not know. Mr. Florenz stated that the parcels should be reviewed for a better sense of the land. Chair Jacobs suggested a site visit for the Committee Members with Mr. Bohannon.

Chair Jacobs stated that taking a natural resource inventory (NRI) of the land and coming up with a management plan may be helpful. Ms. Chalice mentioned Antioch University New England and creating a CSI for students to review the parcels or conduct a NRI. She continued, offering to bring in an application. Mr. Florenz agreed and suggested having a study of the

viability of agriculture on these parcels. Mr. Daloz noted that an agricultural focus for the land would be preferable. Chair Jacobs stated that an NRI may not be necessary but it is worth taking a step back and looking at what Keene wants the parcel to be in twenty years. He continued, stating that what we do today will have an impact for the future.

Charles inquired about having sheep herds on the land. Chair Jacobs stated that herding used to occur in Keene and the best person to talk with is Bruce Clamor. Mr. Florenz noted that it is a lot of work for animals to be on the land and does not believe many people would inquire about land for animal use. He continued, noting that there is more open space than sought after.

Chair Jacobs stated that Mr. Bohannon is in favor of agricultural use on the parcels just as much as the Committee. Ms. Chalice stated that she recently received a list of grant opportunities focused on helping communities create walkable, healthy economically vibrant neighborhoods through the development of local food systems. Ms. Chalice stated that she will send out this list to Committee Members as well as bring in a CSI application for Antioch University. Chair Jacobs stated that the Committee needs to discuss possibilities with Mr. Bohannon first. Ms. Welsh suggested a site visit with Mr. Bohannon. Ms. Chalice stated that she will send out a doodle poll to determine an available time for all Committee Members.

Chair Jacobs stated that there is no urgency for a CSI because Mr. Bohannon needs to be on board with any decision made. Mr. Florenz and Mr. Daloz discussed the location and pathways to Bent Court and other ecological details of the parcels.

4. Continued: “A Consideration for the Keene Agricultural Council”

Ms. Chalice stated that the section of the Keene Master Plan regarding agriculture and food is in the agenda. Ms. Wilton stated that there is another section of the Master Plan on pg. 72 referring to local manufacturing and agriculture. Ms. Chalice stated that there is also literature from the CCP in the agenda. Mr. Daloz referred to pg. 72 and stated that the city should be actively recruiting food processing and packaging facilities. Ms. Chalice noted that Hannah Grimes may be bringing back a kitchen.

Charles referred to Burlington, Vermont and stated that they have a large manufacturing facility that farmers are able to rent to produce commercial like products. He continued, stating that Keene used to produce a lot of their food but a large percentage is now imported. Chair Jacobs stated that there used to be a canning kitchen and the equipment was available for people to use but this was almost 40 years ago. He continued stating the Keene State College or the Extension Office was involved and the intention was to show people how to produce their own food. Chair Jacobs noted that people could take advantage of local food if they knew how to preserve it.

Ms. Wilton presented documentation from the New Hampshire Department of Agriculture Markets and Food and that Massachusetts Local Food Action Plan which was reconfigured in October 2015. Ms. Wilton read aloud goals from the Local Food Action Plan including: increase production, sales and consumption of Massachusetts grown foods; create jobs and economic opportunity in food and farming and improve wages and skills of food system workers; protect

the land and water needed to produce food; maximize environmental benefits from agriculture and fishing and ensure food safety; reduce hunger and food insecurity; increase the availability of healthy food to all residents and reduce food waste. Ms. Wilton stated that these items seem to tie in with the Agriculture Committee's vision. Chair Jacobs asked if this document expands on the Keene Master Plan. Ms. Wilton stated that the Master Plan has little focus on agriculture. Ms. Wilton stated that she will send out the link for the document.

Allison suggested working with the Extension Office. She referred to a person who received a nutrition grant and now educates and Hannaford and other markets. Ms. Welsh suggested the Agricultural Committee focus on an agricultural component and possibly receives funding. She continued, noting the Committee needs to look at this from a micro level and ensure funding for each project instead of discussing large ideas that may not work without the funding.

Mr. Florenz agreed and stated that the Committee needs to have specific ideas before approaching other organizations. He continued, stating that action steps need to be made and referred to the Massachusetts Action Plan and stated that documentation identifying needs has already been created –the Committee needs to decide specific items to address.

Ms. Welsh stated that Ms. Amanda Littleton should be contacted and noted that she had an interesting presentation on local food efforts that the Committee should watch. Ms. Chalice stated that she will contact Ms. Littleton. Mr. Florenz stated that the Monadnock Farm and Community group has a better idea of all of the interested agriculture and food parties. He continued, stating that it is important to know where the Agricultural Committee fits in. Chair Jacobs noted that the Keene Master Plan along with other plans are platforms to create action steps. Chair Jacobs noted Healthy Monadnock as a possible partner as well.

Mr. Daloz suggested having possible partnerships like Ms. Littleton and Healthy Monadnock come into a meeting to discuss possible action items. Mr. Florenz stated that the Committee would need to identify a question to ask. Ms. Chalice suggested asking what gap is present in the community and how to fill it. Ms. Wilton stated that it is a loss of communication amongst the different groups. Mr. Florenz stated that this is what the Coalition looks to help with-to be a liaison for the groups and have one goal. He continued, stating that the Agriculture Committee is the interface with the city and can help the Coalition in that way.

Chair Jacobs stated that Mark sits on the Monadnock Farm Community Coalition and asked if there are any specific concerns that the Committee can help with. Mr. Florenz replied, no. Chair Jacobs stated that the Committee needs to have a question to ask before bringing in different groups. Ms. Welsh stated that the Committee does not need to reinvent the wheel and noted that the Committee is not aware of everything already happening in the community. Mr. Florenz stated that the Committee has done great work including more agriculture in schools and community gardening as well as working with the farmer's market.

Chair Jacobs referred to food preservation and that this could be an opportunity to increase food production. Ms. Welsh stated that Stonewall Farm had canning classes and suggested approaching Keene Continuing Education to have classes. Mr. Florenz asked what the Committee's role will be- whether it is education or writing grants. Chair Jacobs stated that the

first step may be a kitchen and noted that prepared foods must be made in specific regulatory facilities. Mr. Florenz stated that there has been discussion of creating a kitchen for the community. Chair Jacobs suggested bringing interested parties together to discuss this idea. Mr. Florenz stated that these conversations are already happening. Chair Jacobs suggested approaching Ms. Littleton and asking her to come to a meeting. Ms. Welsh suggested contacting CNS for a small grant. Ms. Wilton suggested contacting the Community Kitchen and noted that they had canning workshops in the past. Chair Jacobs stated that it would be beneficial to have community partners, specifically Ms. Littleton, come to a meeting and bring the Committee up to speed on what is already going on in the community.

Mr. Daloz asked if the meeting should be publicized to the public so others can come. Chair Jacobs agreed. Mr. Florenz noted that any publicity is good. Ms. Chalice stated that she will contact Ms. Littleton and ask her to give a presentation and will send out a doodle poll as well.

Mr. Bettler noted that the Committee approached Antioch University for a project and it was not picked up by them but Keene State College took a project in 2013 in reference to layer mapping. Mr. Daloz asked where different work products go and if there is a library. Ms. Chalice stated that she is not sure but will look into this. Chair Jacobs stated that the city and colleges have their libraries and catalogs linked digitally.

5. New Business:

6. Next Meeting: Next meeting date: January 21, 2015

7. More Time:

8. Adjournment

Chair Link adjourned the meeting at 4:34 PM.

Respectfully submitted by:

Lana Bluege, Minute-taker

December 17, 2015