

City of Keene
New Hampshire

AGRICULTURE COMMISSION
MEETING MINUTES

Wednesday, February 14, 2018

3:30 pm

City Hall, 2nd Floor
Conference Room

Members Present:

Sarah Wilton, Chair
Charles Daloz, Vice Chair
Bettina A. Chadbourne, City Councilor
Catherine Souther, Member

Staff Present:

Michele Chalice, City Planner

Members not present:

Aaron Moody, Member
Mark Florenz, Member

Guests present:

John Therriault, Guest
Rachel Brice, Guest

1) **Call to order and roll call**

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

2) **Approve January 10, 2018 minutes**

Councilor Chadbourne moved to accept the January 10, 2018 minutes, Mr. Daloz seconded and motion passed unanimously.

3) **Elect 2018 Chair & Vice Chair**

Councilor Chadbourne nominated Chair Wilton as Chair for 2018 and the nomination passed unanimously. Councilor Chadbourne nominated Ms. Souther as 2018 Vice Chair and the nomination passed unanimously.

4) **Chicken Brochure– Revisions Approval**

Ms. Chalice said she made the changes the committee requested at last month's meeting. She added a "Fire Hazard" bullet as well. Chair Wilton stated that the *Why Keep Chickens* section should be moved to Number 1 in the brochure as the introduction. She proposed the layout as

follows: 1) Why Keep Chickens 2) Being a Good Chicken Neighbor 3) Being a Good Chicken Owner and 4) Where are Chickens Allowed?

Chair Wilton encouraged committee to make changes quickly to have brochure distributed in public by Easter and spring time. Ms. Souther replied that she likes the current layout and that making more edits would delay the approval, printing and release process and to might be good to leave brochure as is as a first edition. Ms. Brice asked how long the editing changes would delay the release process. Ms. Chalice said at the next meeting. Chair Wilton asked why the brochure has to be approved again? Ms. Chalice replied if there is complete approval on the sequencing and editing just involves layout then there should not be a delay in approval, editing and printing. Chair Wilton proposed to move “Why Keep Chickens” to the far left and “Where are Chickens Allowed” should take its place. Ms. Chadbourne suggested that the formatting on the bottom of the front page should be consolidated. She also suggested a change for the top front page formatting by dropping City of Keene down on the page. She said the last column on the right and the titles can be pushed up as well.

Councilor Chadbourne moved to allow City staff to make suggested changes, including formatting, to the Chicken brochure and publish without further review by the committee, Mr. Daloz seconded and motion was passed by unanimous vote.

Ms. Chalice said she can make about 30 copies but the City cannot do a mass printing. She said Mr. Bohannon said donation money is available for things like this but the request must go in front of City Council. She said the donors sometimes want their logos on the brochure and sometimes they do not. The brochures will be color and she can print 30 copies of the brochure for immediate distribution. Chair Wilton said that Horse and Buggy has expressed interest in the brochure as well As Agway. Ms. Chalice said she will have them available at the 4th floor reception for pick up. Ms. Brice suggested adding a url link to the display, as well as the brochure to direct people to the Planning webpage and Agriculture Commission webpage as well. Ms. Chalice said she could also put it on the City Facebook page as well. Councilor Chadbourne suggested putting the link on the back of the brochure stating: “if you would like an online copy go to...” Ms. Souther said it would also be good to put the link on the display that brochures will be housed in. Ms. Chalice said there is no reason it should be an issue. Mr. Daloz shared that the seal could be moved over to the front of the brochure and Chair Wilton agreed with him as it is a City-produced brochure. Ms. Souther and Ms. Chalice agreed that is also provides more room for additional information.

5) **Agriculture Commission Brochure Content Discussion-**

Chair Wilton asked Ms. Souther where she found the beautiful pictures and she said they are all locally-sourced pictures from all over town. Councilor Chadbourne suggested putting photo credits underneath photos and Ms. Souther said she was planning to add photo credits for promotional purposes as well. Ms. Souther said they could name Right to Farm, Legislation of Interest for Resolving Potential Conflict, Definition of Agriculture, and Building Permit Waiver would also be useful to farmers, as well as other highlights from the toolkit. She said she could get some more suggestions from members on other pieces that might be helpful. Ms. Chalice said the toolkit covered definitions, questions and topic areas

that could be pulled from the flow chart. Ms. Souther said she examined the flow chart but could not find a way to integrate the topics onto the actual brochure. She said she could link to the toolkit to a resources page instead and reformat the layout. Mr. Therriault suggested that they add honey under the last bulleted line under Agriculture in Keene (under Diverse Local Crops). Ms. Souther suggested adding maple products as well. Chair Wilton recommended they hold off on putting out the Agriculture Brochure to avoid leaving out important items they might not have covered. Ms. Souther said it is not an exhaustive list, more of a rough draft allowing for suggestions from members. Councilor Chadbourne clarified that Chair Wilton would like to sit with the brochure for a while longer to make sure they do not leave important items out. Ms. SOuther said she would work on the photo credits in the meantime.

Ms. Chalice suggested asking what topic areas a farmer would like to see on the brochure. Ms. Souther said she could go talk to farmers at the farmer's market. Councilor Chadbourne suggested showing the brochure to a few farmers, for example, at the Farmer's Market. Mr. Therriault said there are plenty of farms to choose from such as Stonewall Farm, Archway Farm, Green Wagon Farm and Dusty Dog Farm.. Ms. Souther said they could provide a list of local farms. Mr. Daloz said they change so often that perhaps it is not worth adding the list. Chair Wilton said she would like to show brochure to Hillside Springs Farm Ms. Souther said she would like to speak to Little Greens and Green Wagon. Councilor Chadbourne said she would talk to Stonewall Farm.

Ms. Chalice asked if members would like a digital copy of the brochure so members can send out emails to farmers if need be before the next meeting. Ms. Souther said she will make changes to the draft such as adding the photo credits and implementing changes based on farmer input. Ms. Chalice said she will place a DRAFT watermark and send it out to committee members before the next meeting. Ms. Brice asked if she looked at examples of brochures online. Ms. Souther said she did look at a variety of examples and some are more minimalist in content and rely on maps and advertisements from farms. Chair Wilton stated there is no purpose of having a map as the commission is not a geographical society. On the other hands, there is so much information to put out if they do not have a map, they can put a list of farmers instead.

6) New Agenda Items and Other Updates

Ms. Chalice stated that Executive Director of the Monadnock Farm and Community Coalition is willing to come and speak at the next meeting to discuss her organization and materials about agricultural commissions. Ms. Chalice said she asked her to keep her presentation to 15 minutes so they have time for other agenda items. Chair Wilton agreed and said they will need to address chicken brochure at next meeting.

Mr. John Therriault introduced himself and presented his proposal to create a minimalist pollinator habitat on City-owned land. He said he is attempting a simple, small 10 x 10 foot plot to plant in three different wildflowers, Dutch white clover, pink sedum and New England asters. He plans to document how the patch does over spring and summer and how

well it overwinters. If it is successful, Mr. Therriault will put a few acres in, but for now, he wants to experiment with the success of this low cost, three seed combination which does not require any maintenance. Mr. Therriault described a three-step process: (1) he will place black plastic on the ground for about three weeks which will heat the ground and cause any seed (grasses) to sprout and die, (2) he will pull plastic up and spread white clover and New England aster seeds and (3) he would plant small sedum plants pseudo randomly in the area (he has been propagating seed in his basement under lights). The white clover would provide the ground cover to keep other seed down (6 inches at full height), the sedum would provide the next layer (10-12 inches high) and New England asters the top layer (2 feet). Mr. Therriault said the clovers would provide flowers for pollinators (nectar and pollen) from early June to mid-September, the sedum from July- September and the asters late from late August to the hard frost. He said this would provide a long period of time where bees, butterflies and other pollinators could use that patch to gather nectar and pollen. He emphasized it would be a small patch to see how it prospers over a full year. Ms. Brice said clover fixes nitrogen in the soil and will feed the aster.

Chair Wilton asked what Mr. Therriault would like from AGC. Mr. Therriault replied he is asking the committee's approval. Chair Wilton said she likes the idea and would like Mr. Therriault to come and give periodic updates. Mr. Therriault said he would be happy to. Mr. Daloz said he would love to work with Mr. Therriault on this idea. He also said there is a group called Friends of Open Space which has a pollinator garden established at the community gardens which started next year. Mr. Therriault said there is also a pollinator patch at the Keene Country Club which has become goldenrod-dominated.

Mr. Daloz asked Mr. Therriault how he is connected to the City of Keene and he replied that he lives in Keene. Ms. Souther said pollinator gardens are an area of interest for AGC and she already put in a request for a pollinator habitat map and that will be available the next meeting. Mr. Therriault said there is tremendous amount of information out there about pollinator patches. Chair Wilton asked if the pollinator habitat maps are necessary or are they ubiquitous enough. Ms. Chalice said Mr. Schoefman, City Planner, will be selecting sites that are suitable in the City. Chair Wilton asked about water and Mr. Therriault replied native wildflowers can cope with droughts. Ms. Chalice said Mr. Schoefman will be checking the parks, trails and city lands.

Councilor Chadbourne said this is a great way to promote agriculture. Ms. Souther said maybe they can do a pollinator garden brochure next. Councilor Chadbourne proposed getting schools involved as well. Mr. Therriault replied he wants to do the trial run as the first step in a couple of different areas, his own yard, a park and a piece of City land. He said if it is viable, he would be happy to roll it out on a larger basis. Mr. Therriault said Mr. Bohannon suggested the piece of land behind Monadnock View Cemetery. Ms. Brice suggested the front lawn of the City Public Library. Ms. Chalice said they have to work with Mr. Bohannon's cycle for parcels for particular sites. Chair Wilton stated that the beauty of this project is the small scale scope of it. Councilor Chadbourne said Bent Court is another piece of property and Mr. Therriault replied that is currently under contract. Mr. Daloz said in Bent Court it could be done on the other side of the stream because it is hard to access. Ms. Chalice said locations are ultimately up to Mr. Bohannon and their ideas can be

communicated through the minutes. Mr. Therriault said New England aster seeds need to be stratified, they need to be placed in wet sand and put in the refrigerator for a couple of months to simulate winter. He said he only has enough aster seeds for three plots so that is also a limiting factor for next year. He said you once you grow the asters you can bag the seed heads, however, this year he only has enough for maybe 300 square feet.

Councilor Chadbourne moved to recommend to Mr. Andy Bohannon that he work with Mr. Therriault on establishing a pollinator habitat test plot on City-owned property, Mr. Daloz seconded and the motion passed unanimously.

Ms. Brice introduced herself as an interested Antioch University New England graduate Student with strong interests in agriculture in Keene. She said she would like to get involved in AGC and frequently reads the minutes, and is aware AGC is looking for an Antioch intern. She said she has many ideas to share that they can discuss at a later date.

Mr. Daloz read aloud the HB 1233 bill and expressed his disappointment at what is stated in the bill. He said he attended a House meeting in Concord where they were debating this bill and it was passed 9 to 0, without any discussion about preempting local regulation of seeds and fertilizer. He said they want to rush the bill through the legislature and get it passed by March. Mr. Daloz stated he finds it unnerving that the State wants to regulate all this material as strictly as it is stated in the Bill and disallow local regulation.

Ms. Souther said they have been unable to make a City ordinance to stop smoking at bus stops because it is not permitted to make a City ordinance regarding tobacco. She said you would have to go through Concord and fight the big company lobbyists which are discouraging. Mr. Therriault shared that Mr. Sean Jasper, the current agriculture commissioner, supports this bill because it is difficult for people to transport and sell seeds if there are so many different regulations in the State and it makes commerce in New Hampshire easier. He said the lobbyists want the bill passed because they do not want town saying they do not want seeds with neonicotinoid pesticides.

Ms. Chalice stated that other committees have found legislative issues of concern and drafted letters to send to City Council and passed on to all the representatives. Mr. Therriault said it passed committee, and it will go on the consent calendar in the House, OTP (Ought to Pass) Bill, one vote for all 50 bills, however any single house member can ask that an OTP bill can be pulled off and treated separately. He said AGC needs a House member from the five wards of Keene or at-large members to ask that the bill be pulled off the consent calendar. The Speaker of the House decides when it is passed through and members should take action now. Ms. Chalice suggested they act as citizens instead of as a committee because of the time sensitive nature of the bill. She said members can send emails and phone calls to the House Representative, Senate and Governor. Mr. Daloz said in part he raised the issue to discuss how as a committee they should monitor these bills and not let them slip. Ms. Chalice said the City Clerk tries to identify issues and she said she will try to catch these bills as they arise, however, it is best to keep tabs on these bills as a committee. Mr. Therriault said it has already passed Committee so the only option left is to pull it off consent calendar and ask Keene representatives to vote “nay.”

Chair Wilton asked what they could do as a commission to discourage citizen neonicotinoid use. She stated that even though the pesticides and seeds are available, AGC can discourage their use through communication to City government. Chair Wilton said people still have a choice to some extent and AGC can assert their own policy.

8) **Next Meeting – Wednesday, March 14, at 3:30PM, Roe Ann Tsoulas, Director, Monadnock Farm and Community Coalition**

9) **Adjournment-** Chair Wilton adjourned meeting at 4:45 pm.

Respectfully submitted by,

Ayshah Kassamali-Fox, Minute-Taker