

City of Keene
New Hampshire

AGRICULTURE COMMISSION
MEETING MINUTES

Wednesday, March 13, 2019

3:30 PM

4th Floor Conference Room

Members:

Catherine (Kit) Souther, Vice Chair
Councilor Bettina A. Chadbourne
Mark Florenz
Charles Daloz

Staff:

Rhett Lamb, Planning Director

Members not present:

Aaron Moody

1) Call to Order

Meeting was called to order at 3:39 pm.

2) Approve July 12, 2018 Minutes

Councilor Chadbourne moved to accept the July 12, 2018 minutes, Mr. Florenz seconded and motion was passed unanimously.

3) Election of Officers

Councilor Chadbourne moved to nominate Vice Chair Souther as Chair, Mr. Daloz seconded and motion passed unanimously.

Vice Chair Souther move to nominate Councilor Chadbourne as Vice Chair, Mr. Daloz seconded and motion passed unanimously.

4) Background Info for Agenda

Vice Chair Souther stated that AGC has not met recently and has not had a regular staff person. Mr. Florenz stated said they have confronted various problems. Vice Chair Souther asked how members feel about continuing with the AGC. She said if they can agree on possible projects for the commission they may be able to continue.

Ms. Chadbourne stated that in the CIP the community had envisioned agriculture, community gardens, mapping and she feels there is a lot of work that can be done and she sees AGC as a viable committee. Mr. Florenz agreed that it would be beneficial to have the agricultural sector represented by the City and he would like to see AGC continue. He said he envisions that AGC will have an active role in questions surrounding zoning changes and active farms. Councilor Chadbourne stated that they could collaborate with the Farmer's Market to include AGC in the larger conversation and have members attend other meetings that would pertain to agriculture, for example, in regard to the zoning changes that are being proposed to the Marlborough Street corridor. She said she can keep her hand on the pulse of the City if there is a strong commitment from members.

Ms. Major stated that as a co-owner of a farm in Keene she feels it is really important for agriculture to be represented and have a voice in the City.

Vice Chair Souther said there are two new prospective members from the community present at today's meeting and one that could not be here today. Mr. Daloz said an employee from Agway is interested in attending a meeting. Mr. Florenz said he could nag Mr. Moody to resign so they can get another prospective member to take his spot.

Mr. Daloz moved that the Agriculture Commission continue as a body, Councilor Chadbourne seconded and motion passed unanimously.

5) Possible Projects for the Commission

Vice Chair Souther asked if members have any ideas on potential projects. Ms. Major replied that her farm operates an annual harvest as a family and community event and they envision an event which includes the larger public. She said her farm is also interested in establishing farm tours so the public could learn more about the activities of local farms. Councilor Chadbourne asked if members are aware of the Monadnock Economic Development Corporation (MEDC) as she said the City is partnering with MEDC with the objective of having downtown businesses invest in the creation of an Economic Development position for the City. She said they are aiming to centralize ideas and a calendar for the community and can provide suggestions and ideas, as well as develop a community calendar to help to avoid event competition and foster better coordination. Councilor Chadbourne stated that AGC could participate in that initiative.

Mr. Florenz stated that the Monadnock Farm and Community Coalition (MFCC) developed a Farm Tour that has been implemented once a year for the past two years. He said MFCC is an umbrella organization that represents the Monadnock region but the AGC could become a partner in representing Keene. Vice Chair Souther said a map or calendar of the area could be created so that people could locate local farms in Keene. Mr. Hutchinson suggested that AGC members attend MFCC meetings to create more synergy between MFCC, AGC and other organizations. Mr. Florenz stated that MFCC is a group of interested people and organizations in the Monadnock region that want to further promote agriculture, healthy eating and the impacts on the community.

Vice Chair Souther stated that since there is already a Harvest Festival in Keene, if local farms AGC could recommend permitting local farms to have vending spaces at the event. Ms. Major said the Dusty Dog Harvest Festival is their event and not associated with the Fall Festival. Vice Chair Souther said she was mistaken as she was referring to farm representation at the Fall Festival and not the Harvest Festival. Ms. Major clarified that it would be nice to have the Dusty Dog Farm Harvest Festival event each year posted on the City of Keene's community calendar to create better public awareness. Vice Chair Souther suggested placing the item on the agenda for next month. Mr. Daloz suggested using AGC space to report on what the subcommittees accomplish to stay abreast of what is going on. He said there is an ongoing lack of communication and outreach to other community entities engaged in similar activities.

6) List of Suggested People to Send Letters

Mr. Florenz suggested that they address membership before projects so they ensure active participation in AGC. Councilor Chadbourne said that AGC can make recommendations but the Mayor ultimately decides on membership. She said members have to contact the Mayor and they

will request a letter from prospective members. Ms. Major stated that she sent a letter already and Vice Chair Souther replied that they have the letter and she is unsure why they have not reached back out to Ms. Major but he will follow up with the City on that. Mr. Florenz said they first need to resolve Mr. Moody's membership status and if changing the time could get more people to attend maybe they can discuss that at the next meeting as well. Vice Chair Souther said they probably will not have any trouble filling their roster as long as they have a clear direction of what they will be engaged in. She said if Mr. Moody does not continue on as a member, there will be two more member positions and one or two alternate positions available. Councilor Chadbourne suggested that when Vice Chair Souther talks to the Mayor, she recommend the names of people in attendance today for membership. Mr. Florenz asked if Ms. Rachel Brice is being considered for membership and stated that he can reach out to Ms. Brice and Ms. Kaisa from Green Wagon Farm as well.

Vice Chair Souther stated that there are a good number of interested parties and Councilor Chadbourne recommended she emphasize to the Mayor that they need to move forward with membership for quorum purposes. Vice Chair Souther said that representatives of the City told her there is no requirement to be a Keene resident. Mr. Florenz and Councilor Chadbourne said that they believe that is not accurate and members must be Keene residents. Councilor Chadbourne said sometimes there are exceptions made. Mr. Florenz stated that members must be Keene residents and they have had this discussion multiple times. Councilor Chadbourne said to Vice Chair Souther that as the new Chair, she would recommend talking to the City Clerk, Ms. Patty Little, about membership details as she keeps track of membership requirements and terms.

Mr. Florenz asked if someone can follow up with the Agway contact and Mr. Daloz replied that he can follow up and provide a name to Vice Chair Souther. Mr. Florenz said the potential member would need to submit a letter of interest to the Mayor. Councilor Chadbourne stated that it would be helpful for the Chair to push for approval of members so the process moves more quickly. Mr. Florenz said he would check for member interest at the Farmer's Market as well. Mr. Hutchinson stated that it is State law that members must be Keene citizens, but perhaps they can they make a designation for non-Keene resident honorary members, as long as AGC is not violating any rules to include a greater scope of people. Councilor Chadbourne replied that anybody can attend the meeting but honorary membership would be up to the Mayor.

Mr. Florenz stated that they have been lucky in having people speak to AGC and to the extent that they have topics that are of interest to people, they should invite people, however, it should be a more project-based approach. Councilor Chadbourne said there is a structure that they must follow in terms of membership and Mr. Hutchinson said he is not looking to violate any rules.

Vice Chair Souther stated that for the agenda next month, they can discuss the topic of a community calendar of events, as well as the idea of agricultural booths at the Fall Festival. Mr. Florenz suggested they plan to table the discussion next month and he would like to also continue discussion of representation in zoning and planning.

7) Adjournment – Next Meeting is Wednesday, April 10, 2019 at 3:30 PM

Meeting was adjourned at 4:22 pm.

Respectfully submitted by,
Ayshah Kassamali-Fox