

City of Keene
New Hampshire

AGRICULTURAL COMMISSION
MEETING MINUTES

Wednesday, August 14, 2019

3:30 PM

**2nd Floor Committee Room,
City Hall**

Members Present:

Catherine (Kit) Souther, Chair
Councilor Bettina A. Chadbourne, Vice Chair
Aaron Moody
Allen Raymond
Charles Daloz

Staff Present:

Members Not Present:

Mark Florenz
Kira Wadsworth

1) Call To Order

Catherine Souther called the meeting to order at 3:36 PM.

2) Approve June 12, 2019 Minutes

Allen Raymond confirmed with the group that Mark Florenz was listed as not present but was present and Rhett Lamb was listed as present but was not present at the meeting. Ms. Souther moved to amend the minutes from last week. Bettina Chadbourne seconded the motion and was passed unanimously.

3) Threats and Opportunities in Local Ag

Ms. Souther suggested pasture management as an opportunity to support local agriculture. It's the most profitable and less maintenance options in some senses. Aaron Moody said you would need fencing which could be donated and we would need someone to move the animals and monitor them. Mr. Moody continues stating Stonewall Farm is doing work with the Savery Institute, a worldwide institute to practice holistic grazing. It mimics regenerative agriculture, also known as mob grazing, which mimics old methods of farming and grazing which gives grass time to grow and roots to grow deeper and sequesters carbon into the ground and acts as self-fertilizing. Within the city limits there are folks who might be interested in a space for grazing due to the demand and interest for raising beef. Mr. Moody stated one of the challenges to regenerative agriculture is a significant amount of land is needed. Mr. Moody asked if we could look into space for grazing, either city or private, maybe West Keene, or perhaps the C&S fields which are being hayed and not fertilized at all. Ms. Chadbourne asked why it would be a problem to hay and not fertilize at all. Ms. Souther stated if land is being used and not fertilized the wrong things will grow in the field and reduced the productivity of the field. Mr. Moody stated tractors produce a lot of carbon whereas with cows they produce some methane but they

put it back in the ground. Mr. Moody stated if the cows do not eat corn, they produce even less methane. Ms. Chadbourne asked for clarification on cows eating corn. Mr. Raymond stated cows do not digest corn well.

Charles Daloz stated that Bent Court is administered by Public Works not by Parks and Rec. Parks and Rec was asked by Public Works to handle the mowing, and in order to get permission to do something we need to go to public works. Mr. Daloz stated the head of public works and the facility management is generally known to be very forward thinking in their methods. Ms. Chadbourne stated we could have the head of Public Works come to the next meeting as a guest speaker. Mr. Daloz asked the group if we could have Mr. Moody speak with the head of public works directly and report back to the group. Mr. Moody responded saying he would speak with the head of public works.

Mr. Daloz said last meeting the group discussed a pollinator garden out of Bent Court, which is expensive and we would need to mow the entire plot and start new. Ms. Souther stated the pollinator garden is maybe over ambitious for us. Ms. Chadbourne stated Amanda Littleton said there was grant money and manpower too. Ms. Souther stated that was the reason she brought it up initially and we have quite a few around town and the library. Mr. Daloz stated it was recommended we could mow a third and a third and a third, but the alternative is the use animals. Ms. Souther stated she supports pollinator friendly yard signs, which could be the best way for us to support it. Ms. Souther stated she wasn't sure what criteria is used to determine a pollinator garden but she will check with surrounding towns. Bee Friendly is also a good idea for a sign. Mr. Moody stated some people are allergic to bees however. Ms. Chadbourne stated in her own personal garden she wanted to attract dragonflies as well as butterflies and hummingbirds and she has all of them. Mr. Moody said attracting opossums is also good because they eat a lot of ticks. Mr. Raymond brought up bioengineering as the new term for GMO with new packaging and labeling and companies will not be required to label the package as being bioengineered. The USDA is trying to pull away the negativity essentially.

Mr. Moody stated commercial dairy as a threat to local agriculture and smaller farmers can't compete with a large-scale farm's prices. Mr. Moody asked if we have Facebook and Instagram and if the group would have to go through the city government to post things and public information and such. Ms. Chadbourne stated we would need to contact the city or Public Works. Mr. Moody said he would contact the city. Mr. Daloz said we could post about things like the pollinator garden and how to qualify. Ms. Chadbourne stated that in the last meeting Mr. Daloz spoke about having the manure run off into the water. Mr. Daloz said there are ways to write it up. Mr. Moody said there is a way to do it right and with knowledge of working with the USDA expressed he has the experience to handle it. Mr. Moody said you have to be so many feet away from a water source. Mr. Daloz suggested we try to do it. Mr. Moody said the challenge in a non-profit collaboration with the city, like Stonewall Farm, you need more land and they have to rotate and move cattle more often. Ms. Chadbourne asked if there was a way to move the cattle without having them cross the road. Mr. Moody suggested it could be turned into an event like Strolling of the Heifers or a green beltway. Mr. Daloz said the wire walk is underutilized and there is so much potential there for open or public grazing. Ms. Chadbourne said goats would do well. Ms. Souther suggested cows and sheep as well.

Ms. Souther stated there is a lot of farm to restaurant stuff going on. Mr. Daloz asked how the Agricultural Commission could become part of this initiative. Ms. Souther more cross organization action. Mr. Moody a liaison could help and we could help facilitate the connections.

Mr. Daloz stated if the group actively worked to complete a project at Bent Court with either grazing or the pollinator project we could connect many people. Mr. Moody and Amanda Littleton with the Cheshire County Conservation District has a lot of grants available.

Mr. Daloz the community garden and the Antioch gardens are all around too. Ms. Souther the food friendly yards is also something we can promote. Mr. Daloz do we have little signs people could use to put in their yards. Ms. Souther said she would check on it. Mr. Moody said we could do educational forums and communicate ideas like not mowing lawns too short because dandelions are good. Ms. Souther said we could promote low impact yards or no-mow lawn and how much it's bad for the environment. Mr. Daloz said the committee could give out recognition for the best garden. Ms. Souther said the committee could give people awards. Mr. Moody stated it wouldn't have to be about just flowers. Ms. Souther asked if the committee could give out awards. Ms. Chadbourne documented Ms. Souther's question. Ms. Souther stated this is where a Facebook or Instagram page would be beneficial. Mr. Raymond said the committee could use that platform to share the seed program that the library is doing. The Monadnock Coop donated seeds to the library in a buyback program. Ms. Chadbourne asked when the seeds expire can you still use them. Mr. Raymond stated the germination rate decreases by they are still usable. Mr. Daloz the Keene Housing Program also uses that program. Ms. Chadbourne asked if people could use seeds from food and plant those. Mr. Raymond said he believes that is what the library's seed program is trying to do. Ms. Souther said most seed library's plant and then use the seeds from those plants to replace the ones taken, which hopefully the library has a seed saving clinic because some plants have a specific requirements of how to properly save the seeds so the plants do not grow up sick. Ms. Souther continued suggesting encouraging a lawn and pruning edible landscape to have a food friendly yard and said she would look into what other commissions are working on something like this. Many people are not aware or informed when it comes to agriculture and that is the biggest challenge right, most people are not thinking about agriculture in their day-to-day life. Ms. Souther continued saying that encouraging hobby farms is a good idea too because those folks are usually supportive of local farms. Ms. Chadbourne said she has someone to talk to about social media. Ms. Souther asked if the committee should put the brochure out again and get it approved. Ms. Souther also stated she took notes on which committee members agreed to take on which projects. Mr. Daloz shared we were due to agree on adopting the standards, rules and procedures from the city. Ms. Souther agreed the committee should adopt the rules. Ms. Chadbourne stated she would find out when the report to council about what the committee has accomplished and what the committee's goals and plans are. Ms. Chadbourne continued saying the City of Keene has a comprehensive master plan and part of their vision is agriculture and as a commission we believed the section was weak. As a committee, we wanted to be able to meet with them and go in further depth about the changes the committee envisions for the agricultural master plan.

4) New Business

See above

5) Adjournment

Ms. Souther adjourned the meeting at 4:46 PM.

Respectfully submitted by,
Claire Kunzler, Minute Taker