

These minutes were approved at the November 15, 2011 Commission Meeting

**Durham Agricultural Commission
October 13, 2011
Durham Police Station
Meeting Minutes**

Commission Members	Present	Absent
James Bubar	X	
John Carroll	X	
Vincent Dell'ova	X	
Raymond LaRoche	X	
Bonnie McDermott	X	
David Potter		X
Theresa Walker	X	
Karen Bishop, Alt.		X
Karleen Dell'ova, Alt.	X	
Ellen Karelitz, Alt.	X	
Albert LaRoche, Alt.	X	
Susan MacDonald, Alt.		X

Others Present:

Michelle Auen, Strafford Regional Planning Commission

I. Call to Order

Theresa Walker indicated that a quorum was present and called the meeting to order at 7:00 pm.

II. Announcements

Theresa Walker indicated that the Town Council had approved the request of Albert LaRoche to be designated as an Alternate Member and subsequent to that had appointed Raymond LaRoche to serve as a Regular Member filling the vacancy.

There was a general discussion regarding an email that James Bubar had sent to Theresa Walker who in turn forwarded to the complete Commission. The thrust of the email was James Bubar's desire to see documents handed out well in advance of the actual meeting so that all Members would have an opportunity to be prepared and that all Members have an obligation to be prepared. The ensuing discussion noted that Members' availability was subject to employment constraints on their time, need to managing personal affairs and other normal day-to-day inconveniences.

III. Approval of Minutes

Theresa Walker distributed the Minutes of the 19 September 2011 inaugural Durham Agricultural Commission meeting.

Ray LaRoche MOVED to approve the 19 September 2011 Minutes, Vincent Dell'ova SECONDED the motion, and it PASSED unanimously 6-0.

IV. Election of Officers

Bonnie McDermott MOVED and John Carroll SECONDED the following slate of officers:

Chairperson:	Theresa Walker
Vice-Chairperson:	Raymond LaRoche
Secretary:	James Bubar
Treasurer:	Vincent Dell'ova

Theresa Walker stated that she was not sure that she would have the time necessary for this assignment given her work activities and farming requirements. However, in a general discussion, there was a clear consensus that Theresa Walker had the knowledge, skill and passion for agriculture and that she was the best person to shepherd the Agricultural Commission through its formative phases and well beyond.

Being no more discussion, the vote was called and *PASSED unanimously 6-0*.

V. Review of Proposed By-Laws

James Bubar said that in preparing for this discussion he had asked the Town Office for copies of By-Laws that had been approved by the Town's other Boards & Commissions and was told that there were none. He went on to question the need for the Agricultural Commission to have By-Laws, was concerned about any unintended consequences that might arise from approving a document that is not required and questioned if the other Boards & Commissions don't have By-Laws on advice from Counsel. He also suggested that what might be useful would be rules of procedure that would specify the duties of each officer, the procedure for filling temporary Commission vacancies, etc.

Theresa Walker indicated that she had not had any discussions with Town Counsel nor the Town Administrator regarding By-Laws. The draft By-Laws that had been distributed were an amalgamation of various other Towns' Agricultural Commissions, Land Use Boards, Conservation Commissions, etc. and had seemed to be important to those Communities. She indicated that she would contact Administrator Todd Selig to discuss the issue of By-Laws and obtain whatever position the Town has regarding Boards and/or Commission having or not having By-Laws.

VI. Work Plan

Theresa Walker opened the discussion by asking what tasks or activities do we want to focus on.

Ray LaRoche indicated that he was in the process of reviewing the Zoning Ordinances and distributed a copy for each Commission Member. He stated that there are many instances where common agricultural practices are restricted or not allowed and that we should be working to have the Ordinances amended to encourage more agriculture in our community.

Theresa Walker suggested that we should introduce ourselves to the other Boards and Commissions in Durham to make them aware that we are operational and available to assist them, should they request, with any and all matters that effect agriculture in Durham. Bonnie McDermott indicated that the Oyster River Consolidated School District was moving forward with development and deployment of a sustainability plan. It was commented that Jim Campbell was managing the process to draft the Durham Master Plan and that they are currently focusing on the Energy Section; this does have an agricultural impact and the Agricultural Commission should be more involved with the development of the Draft Master Plan.

Ellen Karelitz said that it was nice to introduce ourselves but that we really needed a clear statement of what we do. That it was important that everyone understood what we do and what we were doing before going out to introduce ourselves. John Carroll added that as we go forward our activities will be split between being proactive by promoting agriculture and reactive by responding to requests from others to participate and comment in their processes.

James Bubar distributed a copy of the Town Council Resolution #2011-14 that established the Agricultural Commission. He stated that the resolution clearly indicates the Agricultural Commission's purpose and objectives.

Theresa Walker indicated that we should establish a Working Group to manage process of inventorying Durham's agricultural resources. The following volunteered:

Vince Dell'ova
Bonnie McDermott
Ellen Karelitz
Ray LaRoche

Ray LaRoche suggested that instead of mailing a survey to residents we should do a visual survey by riding all of the roads in Durham. He also recommended doing a few roads at a time and tracking progress on a property tax map of the town. Theresa Walker indicated that she had distributed a start to the inventory classifications but that it needed to be completed by this Working Group.

Theresa Walker indicated that we should establish a Working Group to review the Zoning Ordinances and recommend an appropriate course of action. The following volunteered:

James Bubar
Ray LaRoche

VII. Upcoming Meeting Dates

Theresa Walker will secure an appropriate location for the upcoming meetings which will be distributed along with the Agenda for upcoming meeting. Meeting dates for the remainder of 2011 are:

Monday, 21 November
Monday, 19 December

VIII. Other Business

Karleen Dell'ova read the announcement that she had placed in the Church of Saint Thomas More newsletter which read:

"God's Gift . . . our Earth . . .

To help protect our farmland:

1. Contact your local Agricultural Commission, elected officials, zoning board or planning commission – make sure they know you support local agriculture and want your farmland protected.
2. Keep your food dollars local by shopping at farmers' markets, farm stands and stores that stock local food. Dine at restaurants featuring foods from local farms. Join a CSA (Community Supported Agriculture) farm that allows you to buy "shares" of produce."

Theresa Walker indicated that the Durham Middle School was holding a Holiday Craft Fair on 1 December and the theme was “Buy Local for the Holiday”.

There was a general discussion on promoting Durham agriculture. It was suggested that if people had pictures of agriculture in Durham, past and present, that we should be collecting those to use in future promotional events, literature and activities. James Bubar volunteered to be the keeper of the photographs, at least initially, and suggested that it would be easier to bring the pictures to any subsequent meeting on a disc or thumb drive and that he would bring a lap top to transfer them to. People could certainly email them to him but given the size of some photograph files that might be a cumbersome process.

John Carroll indicated that he expected Carol Sewell from Loudon to attend the next meeting. She raises Scottish Highland cattle and is constantly looking for grazing land. She has expressed an interest in grazing on the Wagon Hill property.

IX. Adjournment

There being no more business to come before the Commission; *Vince Dell’ova Moved and Bonnie McDermott SECONDED a motion to adjourn, the motion PASSED 6-0.*

Adjournment at 8:30 pm.