

This set of minutes was approved at the December 21, 2011

**Durham Agricultural Commission
November 15, 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:

Erick Sawtelle, Lee Agriculture Commission
Carol Soule, Miles Smith Farm, Loudon, NH
Bruce Dawson, Miles Smith Farm, Loudon, NH

I. Call to Order

Theresa Walker indicated that a quorum was present and called the meeting to order at 7:10 pm.

II. New Business

- A. Theresa Walker introduced Erick Sawtelle, one of the founders of the Lee Agriculture Commission and the Agriculture Commission movement in New Hampshire. He describe how 30 years ago Lee perceived itself as a bedroom community, which had been agricultural based but now food was delivered via the commercial food distribution network. Forty years ago there were 5 dairy farms in Lee and at this point only 1 remained. In 1995 he decided that he need to put a building addition on his farm and was denied a construction permit because the addition would be too close to a wetland, which happened to a manure lagoon that he had constructed to better manage the waste from his operation. This lead him to review the Lee Zoning Ordinances and he determined that 15 were ordinances were directly opposed to encouraging or promoting broader adoption of agriculture in Lee. He and others met with the Lee Planning Board who thought only 1 farm existing in town at that time; within a short time the audience had listed off numerous farm operations in Lee and was able to get the attention of the Planning Board and subsequently the Town Council. This lead to the formation of a committee to address the needs of the agriculture community and one by one the negative ordinances were rewritten or eliminated with the final one being modified in the last year. He strongly urged that

agriculture friendly representatives need to populate all the town committees and councils in order to gain proper recognition for the value of agriculture and to remove or at least relieve the opposition to agriculture that exists in Master Plans, Zoning Ordinances and Economic Development agendas. He closed by urging us to aggressively focus on 2 areas:

- a. Get the Agriculture Inventory completed.
 - b. Become actively involved in the Master Planning process.
- B. John Carroll introduced Carol Soule and Bruce Dawson as potential partners in agriculture tourism in Durham. They have had an interest in grazing their Scottish Highland beef cattle at Wagon Hill Farm for some time. They explained how these cattle are excellent at keeping the brush and scrub down while providing excellent fertilizer in return. They are renting grazing land from numerous people in the general vicinity of Loudon, NH. There was a general discussion of the challenges present at Wagon Hill Farm, ranging from lack of water supply, mixed use, potential liability, etc. Carol Soule indicated that typically an 8 to 10 year lease arrangement would be necessary to recover their investments and make the operation marginally profitable. However, the general consensus was that you don't get what you don't ask for. Theresa Walker asked David Potter if he would follow up with Todd Selig on the generic issue of leasing/renting town land specifically for agriculture purposes, fencing and grazing of animals with the intent of determining what initial objections and issues there are that would need to be addressed or overcome. Erick Sawtelle emphasized paying close attention to the personal liability associated with fencing, inadequate fencing and grazing animals. Theresa Walker closed the discussion by suggesting to Carol Soule that we should set a date for her and Bruce Dawson to come and walk the land along with those members of the Commission that might be available. A date after 4 December was determined to be more agreeable and Theresa Walker will follow up with Carol Soule and confirm a date.

III. Approval of Minutes

David Potter MOVED to approve the 13 October 2011 Minutes, Ray LaRoche SECONDED the motion, and it PASSED unanimously 7-0.

IV. Review of Proposed By-Laws

Theresa Walker met with Todd Selig and they discussed the proposed By-Laws. Todd Selig electronically provided Theresa with various comments and or suggests along with pointing out certain issues that the proposed By-Laws might have made confusing or conflicted with existing Town procedures. After a brief discussion, it was determined that the By-Laws or Rules of Procedures might not be necessary and that given all of the work that the Commission is facing right now that we should cancel our efforts to create a set of By-Laws and revisit this decision in the future if a need arises.

V. Agriculture Pictures

Bonnie McDermott emailed various pictures to James Bubar who had volunteered to aggregate them for the near term. Theresa Walker indicated that she had originally suggested using the agriculture pictures by displaying them during the 1 December Craft Fair at the Durham Middle School. James Bubar suggested that for any future pictures it would be good to identify the photographer, when the picture was taken, where it was taken and, if appropriate, a title for the picture.

VI. Town Annual Report

Theresa Walker indicated that she had been contacted to prepare a write up for the Durham Annual Report. She said she would draft an article, including at least one picture, and route it to the Commission members for comments.

VII. Statewide Meeting of Agriculture Commissions

Theresa Walker and Ray LaRoche attended the statewide meeting of Agriculture Commissions earlier in the day. Ray LaRoche indicated that it was a busy day with discussions focusing on what the different Commissions are doing, status of various legislative items supporting agriculture and the opportunities available for various sources of agriculture funding. He also described the Glenwood Project which is focused on beginning farmers and development of community gardens. Theresa Walker indicated that the issue of forming a New Hampshire agriculture commission association or other supporting organization had no real impetus as funding is tight and the various Commission have a lot on their plates now as it is.

VIII. Agriculture Inventory

Vin Dell'ova distributed a work-in-progress inventory listing of agriculture in Durham. He indicated that the Town was divided up among the various members of the Inventory group and an excellent start has been made. The basis of the inventory was the existing knowledge of the team members as well as a drive-by assessment. Ellen Karelitz pointed out that it is difficult to spot gardens this time of year as they may be concealed by leaves or on the back side of house.

There was a general discussion on how to leverage the work of the Inventory team into the ongoing Master Plan update activity. It was suggested that we should argue for a separate Agriculture section in the Master Plan. David Potter raised the question on how to value the agriculture activity in Durham.

IX. Upcoming Meeting Dates

Theresa Walker will secure an appropriate location for the next meeting which will be distributed along with the Agenda for the meeting. The next meeting is scheduled for:

Monday, 19 December 7:00 PM

X. Adjournment

There being no more business to come before the Commission; *Bonnie McDermott Moved and David Potter SECONDED a motion to adjourn, the motion PASSED 7-0.*

Adjournment at 9:30 pm.