

Meeting Minutes
Durham Agricultural Commission
November 14, 2022

Commission Members Present: Anton Bekkerman, John Carroll, Dave Langley, Ellen Karelitz, Lee Alexander, Alberto Manalo, Ray LaRoche, Paul Rasmussen, Theresa Walker, Dan Winans
Commission Members Absent: Holly Philbrick, Bryan, Cassidy, Ellie Lonske

I. New Business

A. Minutes from the September Meeting – LaRoche moved to approve the minutes as present. Manalo seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously with Winans and Alexander abstaining.

B. Correspondence – Correspondence shared since the last meeting included information from Michael Behrendt concerning the amendments to the Zoning Ordinance proposed by the Durham Housing Task Force. Carroll said new housing in town should be over parking lots to protect undeveloped agricultural land. Rasmussen said density should be increased in areas already developed. Rasmussen will share the Ag Comm's recommendation that opportunities for additional housing should be targeted in already developed areas of town to protect open land for food production.

II. Old Business

A. Ag Comm Initiatives

- Bee Friendly Program – Alexander will be preparing the annual report to the Xerces Society documenting the Town's efforts to protect pollinators. He will be contacting all beekeepers in Durham, Lee, Madbury and Dover for information on the number of hives, honey production this year, and opportunities for cooperation and mentoring. Alexander has completed two talks at Emery Farm on the basics of beekeeping. Alexander said the work of the Xerces Society is shifting with an emphasis on conservation and so it may be worthwhile for the Ag Comm to talk with the Conservation Commission about having the Cons Comm take over management of the Bee City USA program in town.
- Redefining Agricultural Activity – The group discussed the definitions and framework drafted by Langley. Langley said his work is based on the need to establish the ability to produce food as a right in the zoning ordinance, just as having a well, septic system, and solar/energy production on a lot are established as allowed uses on a lot. Work to be done includes - adding a purpose and definition section, which includes an explanation of food security and sustainable food systems, identifying the threats to food supply (supply chain, drought, loss of production in other parts of the country/world), brainstorming transfer of food production rights between lots, providing descriptions of collaborative agriculture, identifying neighborhoods as pilot collaborative food production sites, raising awareness for the need for changes to the zoning ordinance, considering an incremental change to the ordinance so establish comfort and trust in our approach.

B. Farmers' Market – Walker said the first winter market will be held on Saturday.,

C. Community Gardens – Karelitz said the gardens have been put to bed for the winter.

III. Other Business

Rasmussen reported on changes to the Planning Board, including long-time member Lorne Parnell stepping down and two alternates leaving.

IV. Adjourn – Manalo and LaRoche moved to adjourn the meeting at 8:45pm.