

Durham Agricultural Commission

13 February 2023

7:00pm, Durham Town Hall

Meeting Minutes

Members present: Theresa Walker (Chair), Ray LaRoche (Vice Chair), Ellie Lonske (Town Council Rep)
Lee Alexander, Anton Bekkerman, John Carroll, Bryan Cassidy, Ellen Karelitz, Dave Langley, Alberto Manalo, Holly Philbrick, Dan Winans.

Members absent: Paul Rasmussen (Planning Board Rep)

Visitors (via remote): Todd Selig (Town Administrator)

1. New Business

A. Presentation on the Town of Durham Climate Action Mitigation Plan – Rafidah Rahman (via Zoom)

Ms. Rahman gave a PP Presentation on the purpose, scope, focus areas, and the estimated impacts related to the the desired goals and outcome outcome. Todd Selig (Town Administrator) also participated and contributed further information about how this was relevant to Durham.

There were several questions about how this initiative relates to AgComm' s primary focus associated with land health, sustainability, and increasing local food production within the Town of Durham.

Chair will send a link to the plan and requested members review and provide comments/suggestions back to her for further consideration and discussion. In particular, members are encouraged to provide tangible suggestions that could be implemented.

B. Minutes from the January Meeting – Approved with no changes. Four members who were not present at the meeting abstained (Lee, Alberto, Holly, and Ellie)

C. Correspondence - Wagon Hill Community Garden is now a registered as a non-profit organization.

D. Planning for the meeting in April with UNH students in agriculture related meetings)

Anton mentioned the possibility of interacting with “UNH Sustainability Fellows (or interns)”. However, his primary interest is related to Ag Experiment Station and COLSA activities. Ray suggested that we should first start with finding out what are UNH student's vision about the future of agriculture.

2. Old Business

A. AgComm Initiatives

1. Redefining Agricultural Activity - Chair mentioned that she, Dave, and Ellie met with Audrey Cline regarding AgComm's initiative on cooperative local food production (e.g., Oyster River Foodshed Partnership).

2. Bee Friendly Program – Lee Alexander reported an over 80% beehive winter mortality of the ~20 hives that he knows about in the NH Seacoast area. Excessive hive moisture due to widely fluctuating temperatures was a major cause. He also reported that he is working on compiling the necessary input for BeeCity USA annual recertification. There are no plans to have a “Durham Dandelion Lawn” contest this year. But, perhaps another “No-Mow May” (to benefit native pollinators) could be promoted via a joint AgComm – Conservation Commission initiative.

3. Garden and Farm Mentors – Brian Cassidy reported a successful first Pruning Workshop session at LaRoche Farm. Future sessions are Emery Farm and Tuckaway Farm are planned.

4. Oyster River Foodshed – Jennifer Wilhelm (Madbury) will be reducing her role due to other job commitments. Erick Sawtelle (Lee) is also quite busy. There is some uncertainty about how this initiative may continue or evolve in the future.

5. Farm Day (19 August 2023) – Like last year, this will likely involve activities in Durham, Lee, Madbury.

B. Farmers' Markets – Seacoast Eat Local has been quite successful. There are two locations: Cooperative Middle School in Stratham, and at Wentworth Greenhouses (Dover/Rollinsford).

D. Land Stewardship Subcommittee - John Carroll provided a brief report.

E. Community Gardens – Wagon Hill Community Garden is now a registered as a non-profit organization.

3. Other Business

Todd Selig provided a brief update on the route of the Portsmouth Water Company Line as it crosses a portion of the Wagon Hill property.

Next AgComm meeting: 13 March 2023

Meeting adjourned at 8:50pm.

Recorded by Lee Alexander