

Durham Agricultural Commission

13 March 2023

7:00pm, Durham Town Hall

Meeting Minutes - Draft

Members present: Theresa Walker (Chair), Ray LaRoche (Vice Chair), Paul Rasmussen (Planning Board Rep)
Lee Alexander, John Carroll, Ellen Karelitz, Dave Langley, Alberto Manalo, and Dan Winans.

Members absent: Anton Bekkerman, Bryan Cassidy, Holly Philbrick, Ellie Lonske
(Town Council Rep)

Visitors: none

1. New Business

A. Minutes of the February Meeting – Approved with minor correction re: meeting location and date]. Paul abstained.

B. Correspondence

1) The Chair mentioned a communication inviting AgComm participation in Town's April 22nd Earth Day and June 3rd Durham Day events. Like last year, AgComm will participate. Ellen and Dave will man the tables. It was suggested to set up a tent/table, and display the beehive that normally resides at Town Hall Bee. Also, provide Bee City and pollinator handouts.

2) Ellen mentioned there is a person who asked her if there is a "Chicken Raising" Network in Durham. Potentially, this is something that could be set up via a Facebook group.

C. April 10th meeting with UNH students in agricultural related programs

Anton will follow up on this matter.

D. Comments on Town's Climate Action Mitigation Plan

There was discussion about John and Dave's input about what type of input/contribution should be provided by AgComm. Both felt that a chapter on food security should be included in the Plan. John will produce a draft.

2. Old Business

A. AgComm Initiatives

1. Redefining Agricultural Activity – A copy of Dave's spreadsheet is currently at Audrey's office. She seems supportive, and the process is ongoing. Dave, Ellen, and Theresa will continue to monitor.

2. Bee Friendly Program – Lee Alexander reported the annual renewal for Durham’s 2023 *BeeCity USA* certification has been completed and submitted to the Xerces Society. The input on 2022 activities is much like 2021. The annual renewal fee is \$200 and based on Durham’s population (~14,000).

As mentioned previously, despite the “Bee City” name there is relatively little focus on honeybees or agricultural production. What initially began as an initiative on honeybees and bumble bees has evolved into much broader scope that includes projects to enhance pollinator health and habitat, and for establishing policies and practices related to pest management and pesticides. He recommended that Durham’s involvement in *BeeCity USA* be jointly managed by AgComm, the Conservation Commission, and Land Stewardship Committee. Perhaps the first activity could be another “No-Mow May” initiative that benefits native pollinators.

Lee made a motion for this to occur, and it received unanimous approval. Chair will draft an e-mail to be sent to Conservation Commission and Land Stewardship Committee.

3. Garden and Farm Mentors – Brian Cassidy was absent.

4. Oyster River Foodshed – Chair suggested that the next step is to contact all farms (in Durham, Lee and Madbury) about Farm Day.

5. Farm Day (19 August 2023) – Most likely will be a tri-town event again.

B. Farmers’ Markets – This year the *Seacoast Eat Local* site will be located at the Downtown Pocket Parking Lot (on Main St.)

D. Land Stewardship Subcommittee - John Carroll mentioned that the City of Portsmouth will locate the waterline on the east far away from the community gardens. This is the location that was briefed by Todd Selig at the February Agcomm meeting.

E. Community Gardens – No report.

3. Other Business

- Sun April 16th, is the date for the Strafford County Farm Breakfast and will again be at the Lee Grange

- Perhaps the next AgComm meeting (on May 8th) can be a combination work, informal potluck, and brain-storming session with Anton (NH Ag Experiment Station). Chair will investigate the possibly to hold it at Browne Center.

Next AgComm meeting: 10 April 2023

Meeting adjourned at 7:55pm.

Recorded by Lee Alexander