

Meeting Minutes
Durham Agricultural Commission
February 12, 2024

Committee Members Present: Dave Langley, Ellen Karelitz, Tom DeCapo, John Carroll, Lee Alexander, Dan Winans, Ray LaRoche, Anton Bekkerman, Holly Philbrick, Theresa Walker

Committee Members Absent: Ellie Lonske, Bryan Cassidy

I. New Business

- A. Discussion with Alena Warren, Strafford County Conservation District – Warren provided an overview of the District’s history and current programs. She said the District is always finetuning services to meet the needs of the farming and conservation community in the County and asked if there are new services the District can provide. Laroche said the District used to compile a list of vendors of agriculture products which was helpful, such as fertilizer suppliers. He said it would be helpful to have that service again. Walker said outreach and education about the importance of animal agriculture is important as the Durham Ag Comm is interested in changing local land use regulations to enable more backyard animal husbandry.
- B. Minutes of the December Meeting – Laroche moved to accept the minutes. DeCapo seconded the motion. The motion passed with Philbrick and Manalo abstaining.
- C. Correspondence – The group discussed email correspondence since the last meeting. Alexander said after consulting with Todd Selig the town is withdrawing from the Xerces Society Bee City USA program as the program has become more of a conservation program than pollinator program and the reporting requirements are a burden. Carroll said the Planning Board is proposing zoning changes that may impact farmland soils, including rezoning a parcel for high density workforce housing.
- D. Review Proposed Zoning Amendments – Walker reported she and Langley met with Michael Behrendt and Audrey Cline to discuss the proposed changes to the shoreland and wetlands overlay district. Behrendt accepted the Ag Comm’s suggested changes. Langley also provided Behrendt with an overview of his spreadsheet designed to calculate animal stocking rates based on lot size and other attributes.

II. Old Business

A. Ag Comm Initiatives

- Resident outreach on cooperative food production – The group endorsed the statement Bekkerman drafted to invite residents to participate in a small group focused on better understanding opportunities and challenges to producing and consuming food grown in Durham. Ag Comm members will invite/recruit one resident to participate in the group with the meeting taking place in April.
- Dave’s Spreadsheet – Langley has a new name for the spreadsheet, the Animal Capacity Estimator (ACE). He has been fine tuning the calculations to allow for animal size throughout the life of the animal. Walker will setup a meeting with Audrey Cline to run a simulation on different lots in different zones.
- Bee Friendly Program – Alexander said he is placing orders for nucs for hives in several locations. He will be working with UNH to add hives at Woodman Farm as part of a research project on managing farmland for wildflowers and honey production. It was decided to not participate in the farm to school day program this year.
- Garden and Farm Mentors – Cassidy said he is organizing pruning workshop with LaRoche and Emery Farm.

B. Land Stewardship Committee – Carroll reported there has been nothing on the agenda related to Ag Comm interests.

C. Community Gardens – Karelitz reported there are garden beds available this year.

III. Other Business

- A. History of farms in Durham – presentation – Walker will contact the Durham Historic Association to discuss a presentation.
- B. Langley shared information from the Cornell Chronical that estimates a warmer planet will result in a decrease in food production.

IV. Adjourn – The meeting adjourned at 8:05pm.