

Meeting Minutes
Durham Agricultural Commission
March 18, 2024

Commission Members Present: Ray LaRoche, Tom DeCapo, Ellen Karelitz, Dave Langley, Bryan Cassidy, Holly Philbrick, Theresa Walker

Commission Members Absent: Anton Bekkerman, John Carroll, Lee Alexander, Alberto Manalo, Dan Winans

I. New Business

- A. Minutes of the February Meeting – LaRoche moved to approve the minutes as presented. DeCapo seconded the motion. The motion passed with Cassidy abstaining.
- B. Correspondence – Walker reviewed correspondence received since the last meeting, including emails regarding the Planning Board’s proposed rezoning on a parcel on Rt. 4. DeCapo said that proposal has been withdrawn and a new proposal, including an overlay district, will be proposed. Walker thanked Carroll, Alexander, and Philbrick for requesting reappointment to the Ag Comm. Karelitz said there is a nuisance rooster at a property on Beards Landing and abutters are requesting the Ag Comm’s assistance again with removal of the rooster. The abutters have worked with Audrey Cline and the Ag Comm in the past, but it appears the rooster owner is still in violation of the zoning ordinance. Walker will contact Audrey Cline and request the rooster owners be told to remove the rooster(s). DeCapo and LaRoche offered to take the rooster(s).

II. Old Business

A. Ag Comm Initiatives:

- Resident Outreach – We have a list of 8–10 residents interested in joining a focus group to discuss increasing local food production. It was agreed that the focus of the April 8th Ag Comm meeting will be finalizing plans for the focus group meeting which will be held in May.
- Animal Capacity Estimator – Langley said the estimator is just awaiting a trial run.
- Bee Friendly Program – Alexander was absent but shared an update via email:
 - Effective March 7, 2024, Durham withdrew from being a certified Bee City USA affiliate.
 - On May 14, 2024, UNH became a Bee Campus USA affiliate, with a focus to implement pollinator gardens around campus.
 - Alexander is assisting UNH with a new applied research study at UNH “Managing NH Farmland to Produce Wildflower Honey”. The two study sites are Emery Farm and Woodman Farm.
 - Alexander will submit pollinator friendly reminders to Friday Update – April will be “Let ‘em Grow – dandelions are crucial for honeybees, and May will be “Less Mow May” – rethink your lawn, favor spring wildflowers.

- Garden and Farm Mentors – Cassidy has just finished with three pruning workshops, held at Emery Farm, LaRoche Farm, and Tuckaway Farm. The workshops were well attended, and Cassidy and participants enjoyed making connections with each other.
- Farm Day, August 17th – Walker said it's time to start thinking about Farm Day events. She will email farmers in Durham, UNH, Lee, and Madbury to invite participation.

B. Land Stewardship Subcommittee – No report.

C. Community Gardens – Karelitz said signups for the gardens begin this week.

- III. Other Business – Walker reminded the group of the Strafford County Farm Bureau Breakfast on April 14th from 7:30am – Noon at the Lee Grange, hosted by the Durham and Lee Agricultural Commissions. Volunteers are needed to prepare the grange for breakfast. Walker, LaRoche, and Cassidy participated in the Strafford County Conservation District meeting last week to discuss issues impacting farming in the County.
- IV. Adjourn – Langley moved to adjourn the meeting at 7:55pm. LaRoche seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.