

Durham Agricultural Commission

14 April 2025
Durham Town Hall

Meeting Minutes (draft)

Members present: Ray LaRoche (Vice Chair) and Curtis Register (Town Council Rep)
Lee Alexander, Anton Bekerman, John Carroll, Bryan Cassidy, Ellen Karelitz
Dave Langley, and Alberto Manalo, ,

Members absent: Holly Philbrick and Theresa Walker.

Visitors: UNH Capstone Project Students: Brett Schultz, Josephine DeMerit, Fiona Flaherty, and Anna Macaroni

UNH Environmental Conservation Students: David Testerman, Trevor Gardner, and Andrew Dube

Via Zoom: Grace Young, Remi Ostroff, and Ella DeCesare

1. New Business

A. Report on survey findings – UNH Capstone Students – see PP Presentation

Brief Summary: 151 Responses (~2% of Durham population). There were extended discussions about the responses to the survey, and what could become some future actions. The discussion also included some of the limitations on what on the challenges involved to encourage more residents to grow their own food as a neighborhood food production cooperative.

B. Discussion with Diana Carroll about a bug friendly ordinance

Dianne explained that it was Emily Freeman (Town Council rep) who brought this matter up.

The primary intent is to use yellow rather than white light bulbs for outdoor lighting. In particular, mosquitos are not attracted to yellow lights as they are to white lights. More importantly, many beneficial insects are also attracted to white light and often die. Potentially, a small committee could be formed to develop recommendations – rather than draft an “ordinance” or regulations.

C. Minutes to the March 2025 meeting – Approved. Ellen abstained.

D. Correspondence - none

2. Old Business

A. AgComm Initiatives

1) Resident Outreach – [See Agenda Item 1 A]

2) Animal Capacity Estimator – Dave reported that he is also looking at the “plant side” as well. He estimates that ~4,000 sq ft fruit/vegetable/garden is required to support one person for one calendar year (12 months). He will continue to further refine this “estimator.”

3) Bee Friendly Program – Lee mentioned a grim report recently issued by the USDA. Over this past winter there was a >80% mortality rate of bee hives throughout the USA. This is due to a variety of factors including global climate change, pesticides, herbicides, varroa mites, fungus diseases (e.g., nosema), and potentially some new strains of viruses. Unfortunately, in the Seacoast Region of NH the rate is even higher (over 90%).

4) Garden and Farm Mentors – no report.

5) 2025 Farm Day – Is scheduled for 26 August 2025.

B. Land Stewardship Subcommittee – John reported that revised “restrictions” and allowed uses are currently under review.

- C. Community Gardens – Ellen mentioned that 26 April 2025 is the first organizational day.
- D. Farmers' Markets – Will likely start the beginning of May.

3. Other Business

- A. Anton mentioned that the UNH Alumni Association is interested in participating the in the 2025 Farm Day. He was not certain what their involvement might involve.
- B. John asked if there had been any impacts to NH Agri Experiment Station from the federal government budgetary review. Anton said there were none to date.
- C. The 2025 Farm Style Breakfast was quite successful in terms of attendance (362 paying participants), and the amount of money raised for youth agricultural programs.
- D. Curtis asked for suggestions about "Town Goals" that should be considered by Town Council. Lee suggested that any new residential development should include a set aside area for a "community garden" where residents can grow their own fruits and vegetables.

Next AgComm meeting: 12 May 2025

4. Meeting adjourned at

Recorded by Lee Alexander