

Minutes (Draft) AG Committee February 9, 2021

Members Present: S. Stearns (Chair), C. Kueffner, T. Wollen, N. Rawn, D. Dorfer, L. Trovato (alternate)

Members Absent: M. Tindal, E. Hall

Staff Present: J. Kaufman, Senior Planner/Inland Wetlands Agent

Member of the Public: Joe Emenheiser

Call top Order and Roll Call:

Chair Stearns called the meeting to order at 7:19pm

Welcome to newest alternate, Lori Trovato. She introduced herself as a teacher in the AG program at E.O. Smith.

Approval of Minutes:

Minutes for November 19th, 2020 meeting were reviewed. T. Wollen moved they be accepted, C. Kueffner seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

Opportunity for Public Comment:

Joe Emenheiser introduced himself as a new resident of Mansfield/Storrs. He works at UConn Extension, has background in sheep production. Interested in what is going on in the AG Committee. Chair Stearns invited him to consider becoming a member of the committee.

Old Business: No old business

New Business:

Review of Agricultural Leases

T. Wollen asked for clarification in AG committees roll in reviewing these leases. J. Kaufman clarified that AG committee is an advisory committee and town looks to the committee to make sure there are no red flags in use of these properties. If there was a termination of lease, it would be up to Town Council to make that decision.

Leases were reviewed, brief discussion about each as follows:

Baxter: Steward, Charlie, has concerns that dam might fail and flood field. J. Kaufman confirmed that Public Works has been out to survey that issue. It was noted that it is currently not in agricultural production but that steward provides service of mowing and caring well for that parcel.

Bone Mill:

Stearns family as stewards. Noted that they did not get a soil test and that they will be reminded to do this in future.

Commons Fields: No issues.

Coventry Road: No issues

Crane Hill: Stearns family as stewards. Reminder to do soil test before amending next year.

Eagleville: Chair Stearns noted that there are very invasive plants along boundaries. Reminder that some of these properties are difficult to manage.

Mt. Hope:

Extensive discussion about conflict between hikers/dog walkers and their use of the field that is under agricultural use. J. Kaufman noted that she will work with Varga and interface between public and the field. (Signage and perhaps an article in town newsletter.)

Southworth: No issues

Torry: No issues

T. Wollen suggested that field trips by the AG Committee to these leases be planned post-covid so that members can familiarize themselves with these properties.

J. Kaufman resolved to follow up with lease holders on:

Getting soil tests

Providing a conservation plan

Working with Bill Varga on interfacing with the public at Mt Hope property

L. Trovato volunteered to work with a student on an article about responsible use of town land by dog walkers.

Taste of Mansfield Update:

J. Kaufman introduced committee to T.O.M. workplan. Updated members on videos and other CSA promotions that are ongoing.

Reports from Members:

D. Dorfer- Reported that there is a new Market Manager for Storrs Farmers Market. (name?)

N. Rawn reported that she followed up with suggestion at Nov. 10th meeting to ask farmers how budgeted \$750. could be used to promote farms in Mansfield/Storrs. They felt that a Farm Day in 2022 would be advantageous. Not this year due to Covid complications. This will be put into old business for future meetings, and plans will be made to coordinate with Willington and possibly Northeast Crafters who have an open studio in June each year. Suggestion to involve CT Farm Alliance and use library to advertise.

C. Kueffner: Asked if Town Agricultural Leases could be opened up in a more staggered manner and advertised so that farmers looking for land could apply and plan ahead. It was agreed that many of these properties were not suitable for vegetable production or to run animals due to lack of fencing and other issues. Stewards basically provide service by mowing and using these properties for haying.

J. Kaufman shared that the Mansfield Sustainability Committee will be undertaking Pollinator Pathway Registration and working with Windham and Chaplin on this project. She noted that a pollinator garden was installed by Eagle Scout, Atticus Hempel, at Bicentennial Pond and was an impetus for this registration.

Communications:

J. Kaufman shared Sustainable CT Equity Newsletter with Committee and highlighted the trainings they are offering.

Future Meetings:

Next Meeting is May 11th.

Adjournment:

N. Rawn moved that the meeting be adjourned and T. Wollen seconded. The meeting was adjourned at 9:29