



MINUTES
AGRICULTURE COMMISSION REGULAR MEETING
DECEMBER 4, 2017
TOWN OFFICE ANNEX
7:00 P.M.

The meeting was called to order by the Chair, Ronald Gross, at 1905 hrs. Members present included Ronald Gross, Peter Dean, Bonnie Buongiorno, Ronald Distefano, and Tanya Bourgojn. Carleen Quinn and Kevin Staehly were absent and Mark Henderson was excused due to illness. The agenda was modified to accommodate new items, a motion to approve the agenda was made, seconded and the agenda was approved. A request to move Item # 9 earlier to accommodate Mr. Ventres's second scheduled meeting, and to allow the addition of an application for membership by Keith Wilson to the one previously received from Lynn Branscombe (Item # 7). A motion was made and seconded to approve the agenda. A motion was then made to seat both alternates (Ms. Bourgojn and Mr. Distefano). It was seconded and approved unanimously.

A motion was made and seconded to approve the minutes from the previous meeting. The minutes were discussed and were approved unanimously after Ms. Bourgojn asked questions regarding the proposal that was unanimously passed by the members of the Commission to send recorded minutes to the Town office so that the town staff could transcribe the minutes for the Commission. The Chair stated that he had inquiries and "that wasn't going to happen". The motion was approved unanimously.

Mr. Ventres was present to discuss Nuisance Ordinances. He has the ordinances that were given to him by the Town of East Hampton, one for licensing and registration of dogs, and the second was for roaming of animals. He discussed the difference when there is no ordinance and a citation was issued, as opposed to when there is an ordinance; in the absence of an ordinance the bulk of the fees collected for citations go to the State, and with an ordinance fees collected will go to the town. The First Selectman and Selectman Smith informed the Commission that there will be a Review Board established at the transfer station to review such citations and any complaints about the citations, and assist in the creation of these ordinances. Mr. Ventres is working on the development of a set of ordinances that are specific to the Town. A motion was made and seconded, stating that the members of the Commission must review the proposed Ordinance, as well as the proposed Intensive Commercial Farm Operations document which have yet to be discussed by the Commission. This was approved unanimously. This will be the first item on the agenda in January and Mr. Ventres will be present.

The meeting schedule for 2018 was set and approved unanimously, and will be submitted to the Town.

The reappointment of Mr. Staehly for another 3-year term as a regular member was unanimously approved. The reappointment of Dr. Gross for another 3-year term as chair was approved with by a 4 to 1 vote with the one dissenting vote from Ms. Bourgojn. Mr. Distefano was approved unanimously for a two-year term as an alternate. A motion was made by the chair and seconded by Ms. Bourgojn to approve Ms. Bourgojn to another 2-year term as an alternate. The motion failed to carry by a vote of 4 against to 1 in favor; Ms. Bourgojn made the one vote in favor. Two applications for membership to the commission were now considered under Item 7B. An application from Ms. Lynn Branscombe was received previously, and an application from Mr. Keith Wilson was recently received. Ms. Branscombe chose to withdraw her application. Mr. Wilson described his background and voiced his interest in working for the betterment of the town. He has a farm with horses. A motion was made and seconded to recommend that Mr. Wilson be appointed as an alternate on the Agriculture Commission, and was passed with one abstention by Ms. Bourgojn. These recommendations will be made to the Board of

Selectmen prior to their next meeting.

Mr. Henderson is having a meeting on December 16th with the MA. soil expert that he is working with in his organic garden and hopes to be able to bring this gentleman down for an educational session. Shaleen Thody is very interested in working with our Commission and getting her students to attend our meetings, as well as getting them out to local farms. Gross has reached out Irene Haines and the teacher who runs the Vocational Agriculture program for the East Haddam schools, and will try to work on having students more involved. Bonnie Buongiorno will also try to work with the FFA, and she also presented information on the program that Ray of Life Farm has for veterans and first responders. Gross suggested that we try again to get the EH News to come to a meeting so that we could get information about our Commission in the paper.

Comments from the audience were now taken. Ray Distefano volunteered to work with Shaleen Thody. Rob Smith spoke regarding the Harris Property/Community Gardens and wanted to know who was responsible for operating that property. He was informed that the Town is responsible. Gross also clarified for him that the Agriculture Commission's role is strictly advisory. He also asked about soil reclamation and was briefed by Mr. Lyman on the history of this subject. The issue of the supply of water and power to the property was discussed, and Mr. Distefano volunteered to look into the matter. Kim Barrows asked how many plots were leased and the response was approximately 6-8 at a cost of 460/plot /year. Ms. Kitty Flannery once again brought up the question of land use ordinances and was clearly informed that the Agriculture Commission will no longer discuss "individual agendas" or "personal vendettas".

A motion was made to adjourn and seconded at 1956 hrs.

Respectfully submitted,
Ronald Gross
Chair of the Agriculture Commission