

## AGRICULTURE COMMISSION MINUTES

March 2, 2023

MEMBERS PRESENT: Sarah M Silk, Chair; Lawreen Strauch, Vice-Chair; David Strauch; Katy Peternel; Wendy Rodgers

EXCUSED: Marge Strunk, member; David Rodgers, member; Macy Gotthardt, alternate; Kurt DeVyllder, alternate

Absent: Dave Senecal, BOS liaison

### I. Approve Minutes of 12-1-22:

Sarah Silk, Chair opened the meeting at 6:45 PM at the Library.

Katy Peternel requested on page 3, 3<sup>rd</sup> paragraph, that the line referring to her checking with the Div. of Markets and Foods be deleted as she did not remember offering to do such. She then made a motion to accept the Minutes of December first as amended. The motion received a second from Dave Strauch and was unanimously voted in favor.

### II. Review of Local Legislative Items Having Potential Ag Impact:

Sarah reviewed the conception of the Ag Commission a number of years ago due to proposed changes to the zoning ordinance and concerns of those effects to the Agriculture Zone back then. The current proposed changes in 2023 are believed to have possible impacts to the Ag District.

Due to negative responses at Planning Bd hearings, the current Articles 2 thru 10 were reviewed. There is a large group educating the public before March 14<sup>th</sup>. The level playing field offered by the NH RSA's 5 conditions the ZBA hearings must use for review of applications was compared to proposed Planning Bd waivers for "conditional use permits" not currently in existence. The arbitrary nature of such was of concern.

Sweeping changes to virtually all districts would likely change the character of the Ag District to a higher degree than other districts currently having higher density.

There was a discussion relative to the impact to water and sewer infrastructure, which all taxpayers must financially support: the administrative order and pilot program on the RIB system; the prematurity of the zoning changes as there is to be a comprehensive review of both systems in 2023 with the outcome not yet known; and historic town-wide surveys supporting the Master Plan.

Questions arose relative to the multifamily proposed wording and the differences with the current ordinance. The wording appears to not be an exact match which impacts zones via changing number of units and removing the Special Exception criteria assuring a level playing field for all applicants.

Lots with no frontage, common in the Ag District, also saw comprehensive changes and a requirement to appeal to Superior Court instead of a ZBA appeal process. The likelihood of a higher court costs for towns was brought up and higher cost as a disincentive to the ordinary citizen.

III. Updates: Farmers Market (Nadine San Antonio)/CCCD (Catherine Default):

Nadine had advised Sarah by email that sign permits are in process. The Farmers Market will start Thursday, May 4 thru October 26 from noon to 3:30 PM.

No word from CCCD.

IV. Old Business/Any Other Business:

Katy Peternel reviewed several bills: HB252 which exempts farms from noise ordinances; HB574/SB233 regarding WIC use at Farmers Markets (not to House yet/passed in Senate) although only up to \$30/yr per participant; SB162 rabies shots for cats, dogs and ferrets with a 1 year's exemption; HB487 Farm to School NH farms only for local food (175 schools do this already) tabled; HB119 Homestead Food, changing from \$35,000 to \$70,000 before a license is needed.

There was a discussion about the changes in certifications and licensing that the Governor is proposing. Several members commented about the extra security of knowing practitioners are qualified when licensed.

Lawreen and Dave Strauch advised that Farm Bureau had not had a recent meeting. There are many small homesteader farms that don't feel represented by Farm Bureau and big farms.

Katy commented on the disconnect between large farm grants and small farms like New Hampshire.

Wendy Rodgers commented on farms in Missouri that have hundreds of livestock, plus grow their own crops for feed, on a huge scale.

Lawreen suggested that an effort be made to identify small homesteaders and include them on a float for the 4<sup>th</sup> of July Parade. There is a problem getting chicks this year as it takes about 16 months of breeding to get broilers and the avian flu outbreak caused so many flocks to be euthanized. Agriculture is local although farms are still disappearing.

V. Next Meeting Date – May 4, 2023/Adjourn:

Due to the April 5th date for reappointments by the BOS and the April 6<sup>th</sup> date for the Ag Comm, it was decided to meet on **May 4, 2023** to allow members to be sworn in prior to the meeting.

Wendy noted David needs to reapply. Sarah and Kurt DeVlyder's terms are also up.

With a motion from Katy and a second from Lawreen, the meeting was unanimously adjourned at 8:30 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Sarah M Silk, Chair/Secretary