

**Town of Chester
Agricultural Commission
Approved Minutes
July 25, 2017**

Attendance

Members Present:

Gary Van Geyte, Chairman
Chuck Myette, Treasurer
Steve Boeske
Jodi Boeske
Cindy LeBlanc
Richard Trask, Selectman Liaison

Absent:

Jeff Geary

Members of the Public Present at Various Times:

Penny Williams – Tri-Town Times
Tiffany Coroka

Call to Order

Chairman Van Geyte called the meeting of the Chester Agricultural Commission to order at 7:05 pm on Tuesday, July 25, 2017.

Old Business

Approval of Last Meeting's Minutes

May 23, 2017: Selectman Trask motioned to approve the minutes as written. Mr. Myette seconded his motion, all in favor, so moved.

Treasurer's Report (Chuck) - Tabled

Treasurer, Chuck Myette reported that it was a new fiscal year, with no expenditures thus far.

Foodscaping Class

Chairman Van Geyte advised that they are going to have a late winter/early spring Foodscaping

class. He has reached out to Mr. Castricone from PACT this week by email about recording some of these.

Chairman Van Geyte asked Ms. LeBlanc if she would put some pictures up on Agriculture's webpage.

Fruit Tree Pruning Class

Some locations for the winter class that were considered were Mr. Myette's, Mrs. Avery's, Spring Hill Farm or Selectman Trask's property. Ms. LeBlanc advised that apple tree pruning is usually done in February. Mr. Myette agreed, before buds appear. Mr. and Mrs. Boeske suggested that everyone disappears during February vacation. Selectman Trask stated that vacation was the last week of February he believed, this year. Mr. Myette stated that UNH does theirs in April, most of the big growers just start early with so much to do. Mr. Myette advised that UNH extension usually gets 50-60 people to turn out at a farm and he will check to see when is the best time.

Ms. LeBlanc added that you have to spray the trees, mow around the base. Selectman Trask asked how often pruning should be done. Ms. LeBlanc responded a little every year. Mr. Myette added that the orchards cut them back aggressively, don't let them get past a certain height, wanting the energy to stay lower. The Extension puts on two pruning seminars.

Town Fair

The Town Fair is September 9th. Chairman Van Geyte reported that he hadn't received an email about town fair yet this year. Mr. Boeske recommended double checking with Rec. Chairman Van Geyte offered to follow up on that. Mr. Myette reported that he had the banner. Mr. and Mrs. Boeske got sworn in, and got the tables and tent, which are in storage.

Cow Plop Bingo

Mrs. Boeske offered that their cow "Pooh Bear" could do the Cow Plop Bingo this year. Pooh Bear is a 13 year old, 1400 pound, Red Holstein, retired milking cow from UNH. She is used to people and kids and being patted. Ms. LeBlanc offered to help with trailering and a round pen so that she could stay for the day since the event isn't until 1:00 and that could be set up the night before. Mr. Boeske recommended that we get that corner spot because the cow is three times the size of Peppers. Mr. Myette added to make sure there's shade. Mr. Boeske agreed that was another good reason for reserving that spot. Mrs. Boeske reminded about bringing extra water.

Ugliest Chicken Contest

Mr. Boeske advised that last year was a good turnout and the year before was not and wondered if it had to do with the prizes. A cash prize might be more appealing to a kid entering their chicken, than a gift card. Ms. LeBlanc offered that she has ribbons they can give out.

Chairman Van Geyte suggested that since we have Ms. Williams here to summarize the planned activities for the town fair: with the chicken contest, a \$25 prize for that; goats, alpacas and

“Pooh Bear” for Cow Plop Bingo, which he believes last year’s prize pool was about \$160.00. Selectman Trask asked Ms. Boeske to explain to Ms. Williams how Cow Plop Bingo worked. It’s like bingo, you set up a grid and walk the cow around and let nature take its course. Chairman Van Geyte advised Ms. Williams that they would be having a Foodscaping class in late winter early spring and a Fruit Tree Pruning Class, he will post the dates and other information on Agriculture's Facebook page.

Flowers, Vegetables

Mrs. Boeske advised that she had been the only one to bring any last year and Chairman Van Geyte suggested if Garden Club got involved.

Botanicals Classes/Presentation - (Tiffany)

Selectman Trask asked Ms. Coroka if she would put together a class or presentation for the town fair and she responded that she will email if the date is a conflict.

Ms. Coroka offered that she could do any number of 15 she could put on, including:

- with school starting, rejuvenating with natural herbs as an alternate to caffeine, you can start American Ginseng now, needs a lot of shade but deciduous, not near Pine;
- mellowing during the holidays, lavender sachets, sister planting, hops is a natural calmative with a lot of natural benefits;
- Fire Cider. It’s steeped with really hot veggies like onions, peppers, horseradish, you strain after a month, take a tablespoon full, dilute with water, it burns your eyes, kills bad bacteria. It’s a fun class. “That's a good one for November.” Ms. Coroka said that she had portable set ups and wouldn't need to use the kitchen but you have to be careful you wouldn't want boiling water around kids at the fair. Mr. Myette suggested posting it and could get some interest from those walking by.

Ms. Coroka recommended Mother Nature's First Aid kit. She can do a self-explanatory poster combo with identifying pictures. Mr. Myette pointed out that 11 and 1 are good times.

Selectman Trask recommended a list of classes you can do and getting a mailing list going.

Mr. Myette would like to do an Invasive Species seminar. Ms. Coroka agreed that invasive species, like Japanese Knotweed and Bittersweet are problematic and would be good. Mr. Myette explained that Conservation had looked at that a number of years ago, and got a grant to work with Herrick woods, “What we found is its persistent, lot of manual labor, removing it physically.”

New Business

Farm Signage

No one has come to the Board of Agriculture for help with their signs. Mr. Boeske said that he doesn't think it clicks with us. Chairman Van Geyte added that when a business has issues they go to the Chamber of Commerce, this is what we're here for, you should be able to come to us.

Daffodils

Selectman Trask suggested linking up with the Historical Society who is selling and planting daffodils for the scenic by-way and the 300th Anniversary Committee chaired by Gene Methot.

Mr. Myette motioned to buy \$100 of Daffodil bulbs, and some other plantings and pick out an area to plant (so four years from now they'll start to grow).

Discussion: Selectman Trask suggested that the landscaping dept. could do something with Edwards Mill, mulch, and flower bed, in that park area and mow in that area this fall. Ms. LeBlanc asked if the Derry Garden Club (which also includes Chester) or the Rockingham Herb Society (Sylvia) could adopt the planted area to care and provide maintenance of the flowers. Chairman Van Geyte suggested that in addition to repairing or replacing the kiosk, they could plant some interesting plants with a map of what they are so that it's educational, and generally spruce it up so that people will want to go and sit and look at the pond. Ms. LeBlanc pointed out that the Scout project at Wason Pond had just done a nice seating area. Selectman Trask advised that while there was a picnic table at Edwards Mill, it was also not in great shape so perhaps they could replace it or get the town to replace it.

Selectman Trask seconded his motion, with all in favor, and none opposed, so moved.

Guest(s)

Chairman Van Geyte introduced Tiffany Coroka who may be interested in becoming a member.

Ms. Coroka has a graduate degree in environmental engineering, loves working with kids. A lot of people are hesitant to learn about gardening, or they simply hire a landscaper. Its sad, when it brings such benefits to health and pleasure and being sustainable and knowing where herbs, flowers and food are coming from.

Mr. Myette introduced himself and his background with Conservation and Spring Hill Farm, raising horses and kids and maple syrup. Ms. LeBlanc introduced herself, she had previously been on the Spring Hill Farm committee, she took courses in master gardening and landscape architecture and interior design and has two mustangs she is training. Ms. Coroka asked if she was doing Mustang Makeover. Selectman Trask introduced himself as the board's liaison. Mrs. Boeske introduced herself and her experience with the Spring Hill high tunnel, their own farm with alpaca, goats horses. Mr. Boeske introduced himself and said that his wife covered everything.

Selectman Trask and Mr. Myette gave the location of Edwards Mill describing it with a small 300' arc driveway with parking for about ten cars and wondered if she had any input on those improvements. Ms. Coroka agreed that it should be all about education with an informational kiosk maybe of the native bird species, frogs, etc. Beaver Brook in Hollis is a 501c(3) with an apiary, chestnut tree nursery, well-marked trails. There are small kiosks on posts that talk about leaf and tree identification, which helps as you're walking with kids that get bored. Chairman Van Geyte showed pictures around suggesting that the composting thing would be great for Spring Hill Farm.

Mr. Myette told Ms. Coroka about Forsaith Forest off Ledge Road and how Pinkerton had done small signs. Forsaith has the Atlantic White Cedar swamp.

Mr. Myette thanked Ms. Coroka for attending the meeting.

The next meeting of the Agricultural Commission will be on September 26th.

Adjournment

Mr. Myette motioned to adjourn the meeting. Selectman Trask seconded his motion, all in favor, so moved. The meeting of the Agricultural Commission was adjourned at 8:03 pm on Tuesday, July 25, 2017.

Respectfully submitted,

Nancy J. Hoijer, Recording Secretary