

Chester Agricultural Commission Approved Minutes of Meeting January 24, 2017

Attendance:

Chuck Myette, Treasurer
Jeff Geary
Gary Van Geyte, Chairman
Jodi Boeske
Steve Boeske

Guests:

Ken Beaulieu
Rebecca Beaulieu

Call to Order:

The meeting of the Chester Agricultural Commission was called to order by Chairman Van Geyte at 7:03 pm on January 24, 2017.

Approval of Last Meeting's Minutes

November 22, 2016: Chuck Myette motioned to approve the minutes of November 22, 2016, as written. Mr. Boeske seconded his motion. Mr. Geary abstained, 4 in favor, so moved.

Treasurer's Report

Mr. Myette presented the Treasurer's Report:

Annual Budget Account:	\$900.00 spent 168.00. 739.12 left
TD Bank Account	\$73.18 (Dec)

Mr. Geary asked what the expenditures had been. Mr. Myette responded that it had been administrative expenses, toward the brochures.

Mr. Boeske motioned to accept the Treasurer's report, as stated. Mrs. Boeske seconded his motion, all in favor, so moved.

Annual Budget

Mr. Myette reported that he had filed a budget and had received no comments yet. They will appear back in front of the Selectmen on the February 9th meeting of the Selectmen, first on the agenda for 7:00 pm.

Mr. Geary asked “What are we calling for, for dues?” Mr. Myette replied that dues and seminars were reduced from \$200 to \$100 because seminars are \$20-\$30 each person. This allows 4-5 people to attend. Mr. Geary wanted to know if they received any literature on seminars yet and none had come in yet.

Mr. Geary asked “What is the rule or stipulation of town funds being contributed to a non-profit organization?” “Is that something that can happen through the commission or thru the Selectmen through their own budget? “

Mr. Myette explained that it can be done. The town would have to donate that. It would still have to go through because our line item is separate from the rest of the Selectmen’s budget, then if it got approved at town meeting we would still have to go back to the finance director to authorize her to do that. You still need to identify it and has to be tracked.

Annual Report

Mr. Myette stated that as we go to the Selectmen this year, we’re going to indicate that we do this and next year we’re going to be thinking of other type of activities. We should look to sponsor some topics and sessions in the next couple months.

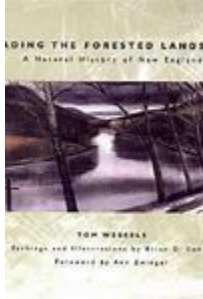
Mr. Geary proposed that the Agriculture Commission reach out to NADA.gov and UNH Coop Ext. and incorporate our email through their mailing lists.

Mrs. Boeske reported that the soap making classes didn’t work out. Mr. Geary expounded on the explanation. Due to insurance limitations, specifically coverage for educational versus cosmetic use which was already difficult to procure.

Mr. Geary felt that the brochures looked good and were very popular during scarecrow season. He had some concern that out-of-town folk should have a better understanding of which farms may have stores that are open. Chairman Van Geyte will incorporate a red circle in the coding of the brochures to distinguish which farms have stores that can be visited.

Mr. Geary stated the he would teach the class in *Reading the Forested Landscape* based on Tom Wessell's book. Mr. Van Geyte asked if forest evolution was covered in the book because that would be very interesting and Mr. Geary said that it was.

Reading the Forested Landscape: A Natural History of New England



"An intrepid sleuth and articulate tutor, Wessels teaches us to read a landscape the way we might solve a mystery. What exactly is the meaning of all those stone walls in the middle of the forest? Why do beech and birch trees have smooth bark when ..."

o

[Amazon](#)

- o **Author:** [Tom Wessels](#)
- o **First published:** 1997
- o **Genre:** [Nature](#)

Mr. Geary said that the first session would introduce the book followed by a short excursion. Mr. Myette proposed that they book it for April 8, 15th and 22nd, three (3 hour) classes, following sugaring season. Mrs. Boeske asked what the class size should be limited to and Mr. Geary was comfortable with a class size of 10-12. Mr. Van Geyte asked about advertising the class with and without the book as Mr. Geary did not want to be left holding onto unused copies down at the farm. Mr. Geary was asked about his compensation for the class and he replied that he would be satisfied with \$5 bucks a head as he was not doing it for the monetary compensation rather than the ability to educate folks. Winter ecology could be a topic for next year.

Bees.

Mr. Myette would like someone to reach out to Pat Martin who had lined up a speaker for us in the past.

Jam making/Canning/Herbs. Mrs. Boeske stated that June after strawberry season would be good.

Master Gardener. Perhaps reaching out to the Master Gardener who appears with Ray Brewer on WMUR. *Grow it Green with Jeremy, Rachel & Margaret.*

Following Margaret Hagen's retirement, Jeremy Delisle and Rachel Maccini are taking over her role as the UNH Cooperative Extension experts featured in Grow it Green segments. Grow it Green has grown to be, since 1992, a weekly 3-minutespot, reaching more than 52,000 viewers who anxiously await our experts' tips on horticultural, agricultural, and natural resources topics.

Seminar on backyard chickens. Mrs. Boeske stated that Blue Seal is already having one so we could post this as a service, reaching out to Radio Grove as well.

Birding:

Mr. Geary proposed that Chester be represented in the National Audubon's annual bird count and offered that he would teach a class to identify birds and participate, using National Geographic's *Birds of the Northeast*. This is linked to agriculture in the huge demand for seed sold at our local farm stores. The exciting thing about this is gathering in comparing data from the initial first year with the following years. Mrs. Boeske asked what the best time would be to hold this class and Mr. Geary felt that it would be best when there are few leaves on the trees, early Spring or late Autumn. Classes would begin at sunrise, with a class at 7 am, then go off birding from 10 am until noon or 1 pm.

Mr. Geary briefly left the meeting at 8:03 pm and returned at 8:07 pm.

Winemaking

Mrs. LeBlanc was talking about getting in touch with a winemaker in Chester. Old Nutfield, I think replied Mr. Myette.

Mr. Geary proposed that the commission introduce and sponsor a warrant article to aid veterans in the community who own businesses, with getting a tax credit. Mr. Van Geyte explained how first he would need to organize a diverse group of veterans and give it a name, for example Veteran's for a Tax Break and research what the cost would be to the town and then submit the warrant article.

Guests

Mr. Geary introduced his guests, Mr. and Mrs. Ken Beaulieu of Derry, NH.

Mr. Beaulieu was from Methuen, Massachusetts and was stationed at Camp Lejeune when he met Mrs. Beaulieu. Mr. Beaulieu is a Navy Veteran, who was injured on two separate occasions and was retired, medically, 100% disabled.

Mrs. Beaulieu grew up on an 800-acre crawfish farm in Mississippi. Mrs. Beaulieu began Veteran's Chapel Farm as a non-profit funded with donations. There is a therapy aspect to it, readjusting and reintegrating to society, helping gain the confidence needed to graduate to a classroom setting, helping establish a business plan, how to manage CSAs, marketing products, and gaining the experience required (up to 3 years) to gain financial assistance from USDA and encouraging communications with other veteran farms.

Mr. Geary explained how agriculture has a tremendous amount of similarity with military service, being a combat-vet himself, has enjoyed working with the *Homegrown Heroes* program and how his farm, Mill Creek Dairy, will be working with the Beaulieus and have set aside a small portion of the farm for incubation.

Mr. Myette asked if there is anything we can do, we have a town farm, if there are ways that we can promote that and work that, great concept. Interested to see how you could make that work, big step from that to a business, like the concept, maybe some other farms here in town could certainly benefit from that and almost do a seasonal rotation.

UNH has great programs, veterans are not ready for the classroom, a gateway to start doing something and gaining the confidence to start. I find a lot of peace in this, but don't often know what I'm doing stated Mr. Beaulieu. Mr. Boeske replied "That is farming!"

Positions & Vacancies

Mr. Van Geyte offered that he had been in Chairman position for a long time and didn't want to block anyone else who wanted to potentially be the chair. No one came forward with interest in taking over as chairman and unanimously supported Mr. Van Geyte continuing on as Chairman of the commission.

Adjournment

Chairman Van Geyte motioned to adjourn the meeting. Mr. Boeske seconded his motion, all in favor, so moved. The meeting of the Chester Agricultural Association was adjourned at 8:37 pm on Tuesday, January 24, 2017.

Respectfully submitted,

Nancy J. Hoijer, Recording Secretary