

**Chester Agricultural Commission**

**Approved Minutes**

**November 22, 2016**

**Attendance:**

Gary Van Geyte, Chairman  
Jodi Boeske, Alternate  
Steve Boeske  
Cindy LeBlanc  
Chuck Myette, Vice Chair

**Members of the Public Present:**

Penny Williams, Reporter, Tri-Town Times  
Noah and Anna, (interested in joining)

**Call to Order**

The meeting of the Town of Chester Department of Agriculture was called to order at 7:03 pm on Tuesday, November 22, 2016 by Chairman, Gary Van Geyte.

**Approval of Last Meeting's Minutes**

Steve Boeske motioned to approve the minutes of the July 25, 2016 meeting, as written, Jodi Boeske seconded the Motion, all in favor, so moved.

**Treasurer's Report**

Chuck Myette presented the Treasurer's report:

Annual Budget Account. As of October the AB account has a balance of \$900.00. \$127.88 has been spent so far for record keeping, from administrative salaries, of which \$160.88 is remaining; with an ending balance in the AB account of \$739.12.

TD Bank account has a balance of \$73.17 as of October 3, 2016, which includes .07 in interest.

Cash. - \$78.00 in cash was turned over by Gary to Chuck, for educational purposes.

Steve Boeske reported that the Peppers had been reimbursed for the service of the cow at the town fair.

Steve Boeske motioned to accept the Treasurer's Report, as written. Cindy LeBlanc seconded the motion, all in favor, so moved.

## 2017/18 Budget

The Agricultural Committee will be in front of the Selectmen on February 9<sup>th</sup>. The Budget will need to be submitted, before that, no later than January 2<sup>nd</sup>.

Compensating those who worked at the fair was felt to be the most important item, as it was the biggest interaction. Steve countered that he would be happy just to have their own tent and table to save frustration.

Steve raised the issue of reprinting the brochures as new farms were added or deleted. It was agreed that the best use of the many brochures remaining, was to update any revisions with stickers.

Deb did the legwork and research for updating the brochures for the last fair, and contacted the farms and did organization as well as color-coded references. A copy of the brochures was shown to the guests of this meeting. \$150.00 was appropriated for this and \$160.88 was spent. Raising the amount of this line item up to \$160.00 was considered briefly, but agreed to leave it the same, \$150.00.

It was agreed that \$300.00 for printing was a good safe number. This line item could be expanded to include promotion, and used to purchase a sign for the Ugly Chicken Contest or other promotional items.

Dues and Seminars. Reducing this line item from \$200 to \$100 as only \$20-\$30 per seminar is enough for a couple of people.

Postage. Postage will be reduced from \$200, to \$50.00 since all correspondence was done by email.

Miscellaneous. Miscellaneous will be \$150.00 for purchase of tables, which are about \$40 each as well as a tent, which is approximately \$100, and more t-shirts, if needed. Tables will be purchased with this years appropriation, and then a tent could be purchased with next-year's budget, on July 2<sup>nd</sup>.

Proposed Budget: \$750.00

Administrative Salaries	\$150.00
Printing	\$300.00
Dues/Seminars	\$100.00
Postage	\$50.00
Miscellaneous	\$150.00

Chuck will submit the budget.

## Upcoming Classes

Gary brought in information on The Bionutrient Food Association (BFA) 6<sup>th</sup> Annual Soil & Nutrition Conference on Decemer 4-6, 2016 at the Kripalu Center in Stockbridge MA.

Author/Lecturer, Joel Salatin, will be the keynote speaker. Sustainable farming practices, going against factory farming, plus 30 other speakers included. [Bionutrient.org](http://Bionutrient.org)

## **New Business**

Noah and Anna were asked if they had any new ideas. Anna asked about specific information available which would distinguish which farms are friendly to families, not only which were open to the public. Using online social media, where you could post pictures, might get more people interested. Gary suggested joining Front Porch Chatter as well as a link to the Agricultural Commission's home page and individual farm pages, such as Hillside.

Anna recommended a speaker who could give a presentation on growing microgreens and raising duck and quail eggs. Jenny, from where they previously lived, is the epitome of not having enough space, grows microgreens in her house for sale to restaurants.

Anna suggested that if Spring Hill Farm were raising animals and taking care of that and when they were butchered get a price back, people who don't have enough land to help out and be a little bit closer to it. Not easy to be able to buy that much land. Might spark them to think about starting that garden.

Gary agreed that when he was doing CSA, you could work to offset the cost of your share and one or two took advantage of that. Maybe contribute a couple hours week, not density of population. Noah asked if people make commitment or not follow through. Towns like Bedford and Windham would come up, people who believe in that movement. Noah added the value of encouraging someone to demonstrate what sets them apart when producing the same products. The Commission has tried to do community gardens in the past with almost no interest, everyone has enough land here.

Some other ideas for speakers and presentations were suggested ,such as: Jeff doing the cheese-making class and Juliette for the soap making class. Cindy will reaching out to the local wine maker and Chuck will reach out to Folsoms. Jodi will ask the Herb Society.

With added traffic from the new scenic byway and Robert Frost byway, and more people just traveling through, it was agreed that it would be nice to have more of a destination for fresh products.

Spring Hill Farm. Chuck asked Anna and Noah if they were familiar with Spring Hill Farm. He explained briefly that is a town-owned farm with one of its attractions being that it has its own high tower. Angie and Jay could promote some agricultural classes there. Chester has a commercial-grade kitchen, Chuck told Noah and Anna, If people wanted to make jams or breads with a minimal cost or deposit.

Turkey Raffle. Jodi pointed out that they had done a turkey raffle and the winner got a 35 pounder, with one being donated to Sonshine Soup Kitchen which was 41 lbs. The raffle raised \$52 and it didn't cost that much to raise it them.

A Pruning class for fruit trees, apple trees was suggested.

Jeff Geary had previously offered to do a class on Reading the Forested Landscape. A 4-6 week class, 3 hrs. per week, off Ledge Road, within the Forsaith forest property. That property has Atlantic White Cedars in there. Chuck saw a gum tree this weekend, with Dick Lewis, that must have been 100 years old!

The Committee introduced Anna and Noah, and asked them to tell little about themselves. Anna offered that the couple had met on the beach, thought they'd live happily ever after on the beach, and fell in love with the Chester property that they purchased. Anna is into horse training and Noah is an aspiring full-time farmer. They have three horses, six cows and a lot of chickens, ducks, peacocks, and dogs. They are looking to raise enough produce and meat to feed their own family, and friends and maybe some more people. Their vision is to reach out to the community, maybe a handful of CSAs in the future, a meat or vegetable CSA, helping people realize what their roots should be and how to focus on where my food comes from and is my community able to give me food, and opening people's eyes. In Plum Island you can't have cows, neighbors are not ok with that. Chester people are so nice and helpful, that old-school farming vibe is not alive in a lot of communities, generation to generation.

Chuck added that it was really good to hear them say that. Being on Conservation he continued, 20 years ago they looked at what's attractive, rural setting, ability to farm, seeing farms go out of business with resurgence of CSAs, that's the encouragement that we have over 30 somewhat, Conservation Easements, set aside for agricultural lands. There was a vision 20 years ago. Yours is one of the first farms that that people see, that open space, as you drive around. Young generation love that open space concept, farming is almost impossible for a young family to get into unless we can promote that and share ideas, and mentoring, like with Folsoms, Brian and others, we want to encourage that. We started five years with the thought process of how do you combine conservation area, Spring Hill Farm, the farmers that are here now to network together and build that and get more younger folks interested.

The Committee advised Anna and Noah that if they were interested in joining, they would first attend a couple of meetings, with the Commission meeting every other month.

**The next meeting will be on January 24, 2017.**

### **Adjournment**

Chuck Myette motioned to adjourn the meeting and Cindy LeBlanc seconded his Motion, all in favor, so moved. The meeting was adjourned at 8:02 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Nancy J. Hoijer  
Recording Secretary