

**Spring Hill Farm
Advisory Committee
November 14, 2017
Approved Minutes**

In attendance were:

Corinna Reishus, Facilitator

Selectman Cass Buckley, Spring Hill Farm Trustees Selectman Liaison
Selectman Vice-Chair Jack Cannon

Maryann Boulter
Chris Carolan
Courtney Cashman
Joe Castricone
Tiffany Coroka
Colin Costine
Emily Kunelius
Kendall Kunelius
Maria Oakley
James Piper

Guest(s) – Nancy Hoijer

1. Call to Order – Open Meeting

Mrs. Reishus called the meeting to order at 7:00 pm.

II. Brief Overview of Spring Hill Farm Advisory Committee and Property

Mrs. Reishus gave a brief history of the approximately 400 acre Spring Hill Farm property and how it was put into a conservation easement and then deeded to the town by Muriel Church in 1996. Mrs. Reishus explained the trust which was created prior to Miss Church's death in 2002 to serve as an endowment to aid the town in the farm's maintenance costs. Mrs. Boulter asked if the trust documents were available for public inspection. Mrs. Reishus stated that they were private documents that could be made available and Selectman Buckley and Cannon advised that they were available for public inspection. Selectman Buckley explained that there were a few remaining members of the trust and that the advisory committee would pitch their ideas to the trust who would then work with the BOS to get funding. Mrs. Boulter asked what the definition of a working farm was. Kendall Kunelius advised that a working farm is one that sustains itself and Selectman Buckley continued that it would be one that is not subsidized by the taxpayers.

Mrs. Boulter inquired as to reasons why the farm hadn't worked out in the past. Selectman Buckley explained that previous tenants had not been invested in the property and the plan was that the tenants' rent money went to the trust and the trust money was to go into farm management which should have worked fine but the trust didn't make good deals in the past, such as paying farmers to hay fields. Mr. Castricone advised that for twenty years the trust did the same thing over and over and in 1998 there

were a ton of great ideas that just weren't implemented. Mr. Castricone stated that he would like to find ways for the town to enjoy the farm even if it required the town to pay something towards it in taxes. Selectman Buckley advised that they were not going to discount ideas that had been tried in the past just because they weren't implemented well. Kendall Kunelius advised that with farming becoming popular again now was the time to have those ideas well supported. Vice-Chairman Cannon would like to see a committee of doers and "if they can make it happen then they should make it happen."

Mrs. Reishus asked if the BOS would limit the number of members on the committee and Selectman Buckley advised that he was personally opposed to condensing the size of the committee and if everyone agreed that they needed eleven people instead of six they should allow eleven people to provide their input. Selectman Buckley asked Mrs. Reishus if she would facilitate each meeting and Mrs. Reishus replied that she would until the committee was officially formed and organized with a chair and vice chair, etc.

Mr. Costine expressed that agricultural plans such as planting Christmas trees would be yield spread over years and Mr. Piper agreed that it could take five to ten years to begin to see the farm profit and benefit the town as a working farm. Vice-Chairman Cannon advised that he would like to see the farm benefit a broader part of the community and the BOS would advocate work with the trust or the town to fund projects and activities.

III. Introduction of Proposed Committee Members

Mrs. Reishus asked each of those in attendance to state who they were for the record and briefly describe themselves and their goals for the project.

Emily Kunelius stated that she was the one who drew up the plan submitted to the Board of Selectmen.

Kendall Kunelius stated that she was new to Chester and had a background in farming.

Maria Oakley stated that she was interested in seeing how the whole town could benefit from the farm.

Joe Castricone stated that he was a former selectman, thought this was a very important committee and was thankful to see new faces around and that he was concerned about what they would be doing with the farm.

Nancy Hoiyer indicated that she was present only as a spectator.

Tiffany Coroka came to Chester in 1997. Ms. Coroka would like to see educational activities and classes and composting, educate people and host events there and identifications of trees and plants. Ms. Coroka mentioned her work with Beaver Brook Association in Hollis, NH. Ms. Coroka advised that Community Supported gardens could become a nice family event reminding of how people seem to congregate at the transfer station on Saturdays, and that while a lot of people have their own land for gardening in Chester, it would be nice if people were on hand to assist and advise them through their gardening projects while they maintained those plots at the farm.

Ms. Coroka asked about livestock and whether someone would need to be present to care for them. Selectmen Cannon and Buckley stated that while people often lease the fields without living on the premises they would have no objection to someone care taking. Mr. Piper emphasized that fences

would need to be put in place for livestock. Kendall Kunelius stated that they could contact an equipment dealer and that her employment with Tractor Supply could be of use with that.

James Piper stated that he was here for seven years, has an agricultural background and would like to see a working farm with the potential to make a living. Mr. Piper suggested that UNH has a large agriculture department with students learn land management techniques and inquired whether they could be approached to intern and work at the farm. Ms. Coroka and Mrs. Kunelius both agreed that while UNH was pretty inundated, anyone in the Master Gardener's program were required to do 50 hours of community service. Mr. Castricone agreed that if it doesn't cost anything to approach UNH and the BOS would support them.

Colin Costine stated that he has lived in Chester for 40 years, originally moved into a mobile home next to Spring Hill Farm and was friends with Miss Church, he was on the BOS when Miss Church deeded the property to the town and was one of the original four trustees. Mr. Costine advised that everyone would need to step up as consumers and be willing to pay 50% more than they do at stores to make any farm viable.

Mrs. Reishus stated that there had been other people who expressed interest in serving on the committee who weren't able to attend this meeting and would put together an email listing of those who were interested.

IV. New Business

Possible Uses of Property

Selectman Buckley stated that he would like to find ways for the farm to benefit everyone.

Mrs. Reishus discussed some of the possible recreational purposes that could take place at Spring Hill Farm such as the sledding hill which she pointed out on the map, along with ponds for hockey and skating, trails.

Selectman Buckley stated that while he would like to see recreational activities taking place on the farm, that agricultural activities should take place to promote a working farm. Mrs. Reishus stated that the only thing that had been taking place prior was haying of the fields. Selectman Buckley stated that the trustees had experienced difficulty with getting revenue from haying the fields and told him they would have to pay someone to do it. Mr. Costine explained how arrangements are common for trade of care of property for haying revenues but had not experienced having to pay someone to do so outright.

Ms. Coroka stated that she would like to see educational activities taking place at the farm.

Mrs. Kunelius stated that her family had no problem utilizing one acre of quality land for growing chrysanthemums. Mr. Costine gave an overview of some of the soil conditions at the farm, with dry rocky soil being prevalent in the North Chester fields, and sand being an issue in other areas but with the hills, water was never an issue in the fields surrounding the house. Growing strawberries in the high tunnel which was estimated to be 100' x 20' were discussed but Mr. Costine warned that inclement weather could contribute to financial losses. Mr. Piper suggested that Christmas trees could be grown both in North Chester and the other fields. The committee discussed the length of time since the property had been timbered and the recent evaluation the trustees had done. Selectman Buckley

advised that there was not much value in the North Chester forestry area.

The next meeting will be on December 18, 2017. Mrs. Reishus will send out an email to see if anyone would like to walk the Towle Road property on Sunday, December 17 prior to the next meeting, scheduled on Monday, December 18th.

The meeting adjourned at 8:16 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Daniel Hoijer,
Recording Secretary