

**Spring Hill Farm
Advisory Committee
March 19, 2019
Final Minutes**

Attendance

Present:

Chair Willa Coroka
Cass Buckley
Chuck Myette
Emily Kunelius
Kendall Kunelius
Maria Oakley

Absent:

Cindy LeBlanc
Colin Costine
Joe Krasowski
James Piper

Members of the Public Present at Various Times:

Dan Fornier

1. Call to Order – Open Meeting

Chair Coroka called the meeting to order at 7:02 pm.

2. Review of Minutes

Amendments:

2nd page, workshops line 2: remove “A post advertising the event with a couple of dates scheduled”

3rd page, second line, remove “ours” and replace with Springhill Farm Advisory Committee.

Chair Coroka motioned to accept the minutes, as amended. Ms. Kendall Kunelius seconded the motion. Mr. Chuck Myette, Vice-Chair Emily Kunelius and Mrs. Maria Oakley agreed. Mr. Cass Buckley abstained from voting. Approved 5-1-0.

3. Old Business

3.1 High Tunnel Rental:

Chair Coroka stated it is important to note we have asked people of interest to come forward in

terms of the High Tunnel rental. It was posted in the Tri-Town Times and the Chester NH Front Porch Chatter with no emails received to date. The one question was “is there water?” Chair Coroka stated that any committee member who had an interest in the High Tunnel should speak now. She stated she didn’t know what to do regarding the High Tunnel rental at this time.

Mr. Cass Buckley stated he could speak into the camera during the next BOS meeting. Chair Coroka agreed and said that she can do the same. She noted there was a NH Farm and Garden page on Facebook. She is willing to place a post for anyone interested.

Ms. Kendall Kunelius mentioned she would be willing to head a clean-up the greenhouse day, if that would make the deal a little sweeter. She would need a small dumpster as there is furniture to dispose of. The Spring Hill Farm Advisory Committee would need to find a date and post the event.

3.2 Business/Management Plan:

Chair Coroka asked if anyone had any updates on the Spring Hill Farms Advisory Committee Business/Management plan. Mr. Buckley noted he sent a word doc to Chair Coroka to discuss. Chair Coroka noted Mr. Myette also sent some past Trust information. Chair Coroka suggested merging the 2 documents together. Mr. Buckley stated that he started doing that. He took the old information from the Trust and cut and pasted it into a new document that would need to be 80% deleted and 20% edited. It is a good start.

Chair Coroka stated it would be on the Agenda for next month for the Committee to combine ideas. Ms. Kendall Kunelius asked if the next meeting could start earlier. Mr. Buckley suggested whoever can come earlier is welcome.

Mr. Myette asked Mr. Buckley to send the started plan to the Committee members. Mr. Buckley agreed and noted the management plan with the business plan included should be about what will add value to the community, not for the town to become a profit center. Mr. Myette noted putting individual pieces of the plan together, should be easily done, and should make the BOS happy.

3.3 Workshops:

Chair Coroka asked if anyone had any concepts for classes/events?

- Vice-Chair Emily Kunelius: Late November wreath making class; nature journaling class;
- Mr. Buckley: Will reach out to the NH Beekeepers Association to see if they are interested in doing a workshop or putting up an apiary on the field;
- Chair Coroka: Is currently teaching “Urban gardens thinking outside the box”. She has the outline and could do a workshop or demonstration; pruning of lilacs as a demo. Would prune a shrub and a tree;
- Chair Coroka: Reminded the committee that Mrs. Leblanc is interested in presenting Part

II of Edible Landscape;

- Mr. Myette: Bio Diversity. UNH can come do a Bio Blitz;
- Ms. Kendall Kunelius: 4H Club in Chester, could rent the space for their horses;
- Vice-Chair Emily Kunelius noted the Historical Society has a museum they are trying to fix up. She believes they are probably attached to Steven's Farm. Chair Coroka offered to speak to the Rockingham Society. She asked Mr. Buckley if that was something, she would have to speak to the BOS about since it was about renting. Discussion ensued.

3.4 Fall Festival Round 2:

Chair Coroka noted come fall we will all be gearing up for the Fall Festival and this year we will have a rain date. Ms. Kendall Kunelius said she was already excited. She likes the idea of a farmers' market. Chair Coroka questioned if enough people would come. Mr. Buckley agreed to do outreach with some local farmers. Ms. Kendall Kunelius also feels one date, once a year is very welcoming. Chair Coroka noted she was getting together with Emily to discuss costs.

Chair Coroka asked if anyone had any ideas for an event or if we should go with smaller workshops.

Mr. Myette noted he liked the aspect of a hiking day. He also likes the idea of fixing up and using the existing garden shed structure. It needs to be re-roofed and re-sided. Perhaps the Town people would be willing to help make it look presentable. It can be billed as "Garden shed reworking day". Ms. Kendall Kunelius noted the need to research what size dumpster will be needed and the cost.

3.5 Field Trip:

Chair Coroka suggested a weekend field trip to other town owned working farms. E.g. Tattersall Farm in Haverhill or Beaver Brook Farm in Hollis.

Beaver Brook Farm has 19th century plantings, working hayfields, rolling meadows, and wooded paths used for walking, jogging and cross-country skiing. There is a summer camp and is more focused on environmental education. There is an apiary but no live animals. They but they also have the Chestnut Foundation, so they have a group of Chestnut trees. Their income is based almost entirely on donations they were given and now they have a ton of members.

Mr. Myette asked Chair Coroka if Beaver Brook was a town owned farm. Discussion ensued about how they get their money. Chair Coroka is going to send out web links to all the possible farms for review. Perhaps there could be a vote at the next meeting to determine which farms to add to the itinerary. Chair Coroka talked about New Pond Farm in Hartford CT. It is a working farm that was donated to the town and Trust acquired. The logistics make it different, but they seem similar. She will also reach out to them.

Chair Coroka noted Mr. Myette sent her a link to a lecture on transforming Municipal lands in to

working farms. It is on April 16th from 5:00-7:30 pm in Brentwood. It is cost free.

3.6 RFP:

Ms. Kendall Kunelius mentioned the Northern Bob Whites nesting on Lake Rd. She feels it would be prudent to investigate timing so they can work around it since it is in the RFP and will affect the first cut of hay. Mr. Myette stated they need to wait until July 1st. Ms. Kendall Kunelius got the number of the local wildlife biologist to investigate, if they are nesting and where they are nesting just so we have a solid answer if someone asks and it is a make or break situation. Mr. Myette noted that they came out approximately 10 years ago and asked them not to cut the hay until July 1st. Since it was 10 years ago, everyone agreed it would be a good time to have it done again. Ms. Kendall Kunelius will call to schedule an appointment for them to come out. It would also be great if they could write a paragraph or two that could be added to the RFP, it would be great. Chair Coroka added it would be an interesting little workshop as well – “Preserving Natural Habitats”.

3.7 RFP - Charmingfare:

Mr. Myette asked if the Advisory committee wanted to talk to Charmingfare Farm again as they did a nice job last year. Chair Coroka noted the notice was also in the Tri-Town News but no responses yet. Mr. Myette stated that Charmingfare might not be interested as they did not get a 2nd cut last year. They invested \$500.00 and only received 1000 bales in return. Mr. Myette agreed to speak with them.

3.8 Leasing of Fields and High Tunnel:

Chair Coroka asked if now was a good time to talk about the leasing and duration of time the town was willing to offer. She feels that the year long lease could possibly be a barrier to potential lessees. Mr. Buckley stated that in order to get anything longer you would have to go to a town meeting. Mr. Buckley stated the Spring Hill Farm Advisory Committee is too young to go that route. He feels that until we have a clear plan of how we want to get from point A to point B, we shouldn't entertain the idea of a longer lease. Chair Coroka agrees we shouldn't offer longer leases she would like to see a one-year lease with an option at the end of the lease to renew. She believes that if a lessee works the fields and then another candidate offers more money, the lessee gets the option to stay. Mr. Buckley noted that “first right of refusal” should not be a problem. He stated there needs to be language in the contract that prices can change. Mr. Myette has last year's contract and will circulate it and make some edits. He would like it sent to the group for quick feedback because if anyone is going to show interest, it will be within a month or so. Chair Coroka agrees that the haying and the High Tunnel take precedence. Mr. Myette noted there was one contract for 2 RFP's from last year. Mr. Buckley will try to get a copy of the contract. Mr. Myette suggested e-mailing Debra Doda. Vice-Chair Emily Kunelius asked if the fields in front of the high tunnel, or if it was just for the high tunnel. Mr. Myette said the fields were always held for internal and external planting.

4. Public Comment:

Mr. Dan Fornier introduced himself and handed out his proposal to lease the fields. Handout is attached. Dan noted he would graze his own cows using the “rotational grazing” method to maximize the yield of the pasture while allowing it to rest in between grazing all while being fertilized by the herd. His proposal is to lease the fields, paddocks, hay fields and barn. He would in turn repair fencing, install new fencing where necessary and maintain all the fences at no cost to the Trust or Town of Chester. Where applicable, he would hay the fields and use the hay to feed his cows in the winter. Dan understands the property should be an asset to the community. He would work with the Board of Trustees to come up with an education curriculum that would include farm tours for local schools, field days for the community to come and learn about livestock farming, basic cheesemaking, milking cows, raising grass fed beef and have seasonal events such as hay rides, sleigh rides, ice skating and maybe a community garden or farmers market.

Mr. Kendall Kunelius stated the group was put together as an advisory only but could make recommendations to the BOS. Mr. Myette noted the Trust is non-profit created to oversee funds are used to support activities at the farm. The town owns the land and buildings and the town has conservation easement and conditions. Ms. Kendall Kunelius noted she would like to see a 5-year business plan as well as an emergency response plan if the cows were to get out.

Mr. Buckley reiterated the Spring Hill Farm Advisory Committee was put together as an advisory committee only. He believes that everyone on the Committee believes there should be some sort of farming on the land. Mr. Buckley would like the Committee to walk the fields with Mr. Fournier. Ms. Oakley would like more information about where the cows would go. Details of how much land would get used by grazing and how much gets taken off the public domain. Mr. Myette stressed there is a cost to fixing the barn and asked for long term and short-term goals to see if there are competing synergies to ensure the usage is not a burden to the town.

Mr. Fornier stated he has enthusiasm; is a business owner; a farmer; cub scout master; runs a girls’ troop in Sandown, runs a spooky-walk in Sandown and is a fundraiser.

Ms. Oakley and Mr. Buckley agreed they need to determine fair market value. The time frame is June. The next meeting is on April 15th, they would like to do a tour and review the business plan before presenting it to the BOS.

5. Member Comment:

Mr. Myette noted there is a Bear seminar on April 12th at 7:00 pm in the multi-purpose room. There will be a NH Fish and Game specialist and they will raffle off a stuffed bear.

6. Adjournment:

Chair Coroka motioned to adjourn at 8:40 pm. Vice-Chair Emily Kunelius seconded her motion, all in favor, so moved.

Respectfully submitted,

Ellyn Bresinger,
Recording Secretary