

Spring Hill Farm Advisory Committee
March 23, 2020
Approved Minutes
7:00 PM

Attendance

Present (via Conference Call):

Chair Emily Kunelius
Cindy LeBlanc, Vice-Chair
Kristina Snyder
Beth Sautter
Ted Broadwater, Alternate

Absent:

Maria Oakley
Selectman Chuck Myette, Spring Hill Farm Trustees Representative
Joe Krasowski
Kendall Kunelius
Stephen O. Landau, Selectman Liaison
Colin Costine, Alternate

Members of the Public Present at Various Times (via Conference Call):

Nick and Christy Ortins, Geary Farms

1. Call to Order – Open Meeting

Chair Emily Kunelius called the meeting to order at 7:03 PM.

New Business

1. Discussion of High Tunnel Proposal

Chair Emily Kunelius allowed Nick and Christy Ortins to give an overview of their proposal to lease the high tunnel at Spring Hill Farm. Nick Ortins explained that they are looking to implement no-till, bio-intensive agricultural practices at the high tunnel and one acre field. They would be growing a variety of vegetables. They are also starting a food truck and would be looking to park that at the property and possibly sell from it at times at the farm. Another thing they would like to do is an honor system farm stand that would be located at the farm.

There was a brief discussion about the need to check with the Rockingham County Conservation District because of the conservation easement that is on the property. It would need to be okayed with them to have a commercial venture on the farm, specifically the food truck. Vice-chair Cindy LeBlanc stated that there should be no problem with it, as the food being sold on the food truck is being made from vegetables grown right there in the fields. A food truck in the past that had not been given permission to be on conservation land somewhere else in town was selling coffee, which had nothing to do with the land they wanted to park the truck on. It was also noted that Nick and Christy would mainly be off-property to sell from their food truck. Vice-chair LeBlanc pointed out that Towle Road does not get much traffic.

Nick and Christy Ortins stated that they are in the process of obtaining the food license for their food truck from

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the state. They are also currently completing the work needed on their food truck to be able to have an inspection done before they start selling from it. They are looking into places where they can sell. These include some local breweries, farmers markets, and a donut shop in Wells, Maine that has food trucks in their parking lot almost every night. Nick Ortins stated that they will be utilizing social media marketing to spread the word about the food truck. Social Media will also allow them to let their customers know where the truck is each day.

Chair Emily Kunelius asked if they would still have need of the High Tunnel in the event that their food truck plans do not come together for this year. Nick and Christy said that they absolutely would. The food truck offers a value-added way to be able to use the vegetables that they will grow, but if they don't have the food truck they would still sell their vegetables from the on-site farm stand as well as at farmers markets. Vice-Chair Cindy LeBlanc said that during the summer she passes the Derry Farmers Market every Wednesday and it is always very busy. Christy Ortins said that the Derry Farmers Market is one that they are looking into.

Chair Emily Kunelius asked Nick and Christy where they are at with getting insurance. They stated that they were not able to obtain combined coverage for both the food truck and the high tunnel as they had hoped. They have had to create a separate LLC for their farm business, which they are in the process of doing. They will then obtain the required liability insurance for the farm. They hope to have this by Thursday.

Nick and Christy expressed interest in being able to start at the High Tunnel as soon as possible. Chair Emily Kunelius stated that if the committee voted yes on the proposal tonight, it could probably get on the agenda for this Thursday's Board of Selectmen's meeting.

The electricity at the farm was discussed. Vice Chair Cindy LeBlanc pointed out that the electric meter is currently in the Trust's name. There would be a charge of \$35 for Nick and Christy to have the meter turned on and put under their name. It was mentioned that the well for the High Tunnel has an electric pump.

Other members expressed their excitement to see something happen with the High Tunnel, as well as their interest in the idea of the food truck. Chair Emily Kunelius asked Nick and Christy if they were okay with the \$500 lease charge listed in the RFP and they said that they were. It was briefly discussed about the process of getting an official contract put together. Chair Emily Kunelius stated that she would check with Debra Doda in the morning regarding who would be creating the contract. She would also ask about getting on the Board of Selectmen's agenda for the Thursday meeting.

Chair Emily Kunelius motioned to accept the High Tunnel proposal from Geary Farms and to recommend it to the Board of Selectmen for their approval. Beth Sautter seconded the motion. A vote was taken, all were in favor, the motion passed unanimously.

6. Adjournment

Next Meeting: April 20, 2020 at 7 PM

Vice Chair Cindy LeBlanc motioned to adjourn the meeting at 7:26 PM. Chair Emily Kunelius seconded the motion. All were in favor, the motion passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

Emily Kunelius
SHFAC Chair