

Spring Hill Farm Advisory Committee
March 15, 2021
7:00 PM
Approved Minutes

Present (Remotely):

Beth Sautter, Chair
Corinna Reishus
Chuck Myette
Kristina Snyder
Cindy LeBlanc
Stephen O. Landau, Selectmen's Liaison

Members of the Public Present (Remotely):

Gerald (Buddy) Menard
Alex Bartels
Ryan Neal

Members absent:

Maria Oakley
Colin Costine, Alternate
Ted Broadwater, Alternate

I. Call to Order

A. Chair Sautter called the meeting to order at 7:00 PM.

II. Approval of minutes – February 15, 2021

A. There were no changes to the minutes of the February 15, 2021 meeting.

Ms. LeBlanc moved to accept the minutes as presented. Ms. Reishus seconded the motion. A vote was taken, all were in favor, the motion passed unanimously.

III. Old Business

A. Treasurer's Report

The available balance for the period ending February 28, 2021 is \$1,009.48 in the Spring Hill Farm line (44.87% budget remaining). There is still \$2,000.00 in the Spring Hill Farm Advisory Committee line (100% budget remaining).

Expenses from January to date (include heating oil, barn electricity and electricity):

Processed	Heating Oil	Electricity	Electricity – Barn
01/15/21	\$ 79.95 01/05/21		
02/01/21	\$ 55.09 01/19/21	\$ 33.75 12/11-01/13/21	\$ 16.37 12/11-01/13/21

02/12/21	\$ 70.50 02/04/21		
02/22/21		\$ 34.91 01/03-02/10/21	\$ 16.34 01/03-02/10/21

The heat is kept at a low temperature to prevent the pipes from bursting. The electrical usage is for lights, etc. when the building is being checked on. The barn electrical charge is around \$16, which is the meter fee. Amounts over that are due to electrical usage.

Ms. Snyder moved to accept the Treasurer's report. Chair Sautter seconded the motion. A vote was taken, all were in favor, the motion passed unanimously.

B. Hay / Cows – Discussion/ Update on status

Mr. Myette said three documents were sent to the Committee members: 1. The overall understanding of what the Trust is interested in doing regarding the use of the high tunnel, the barn, the buildings and the fields ; 2. A Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the Town and Mr. Bartels and Mr. Menard; 3. Plans that Mr. Bartels and Mr. Menard have for the lease this coming year.

The MOU was created for everyone's benefit to lay out the responsibilities of the Selectmen, the Town, the Advisory Committee, the Trust, Mr. Menard and Mr. Bartels, and the Rockingham County Conservation District (RCCD). The land and buildings are owned by the Town. The Town has entered into an agreement with the Trust to be able to lease those buildings so they can work on them. The high tunnel is leased to the Ortins.

There is a conservation easement on the property by the RCCD. The Trust is willing to work with Mr. Bartels and Mr. Menard and the Ortins, and any volunteers, to do the haying on the Farm and the fields on Wason Road and Lane Road to bring revenue to the Farm. Mr. Bartels and Mr. Menard worked with Mr. Myette and Mr. LeBlanc this week, spreading manure on the fields. Mr. Myette said they are ready to present this proposal to the Selectman if they can get on their agenda this week.

Mr. Bartels said they're hoping to put calves out immediately, but they might purchase cows that are closer to full grown at some point during the year.

Chair Sautter said "fair share of labor" as noted in the MOU needs to be better defined. Mr. Myette said the intention is to coordinate labor, depending on the availability of all parties. They will keep track of hours, and continue to discuss it. The job is too much for Mr. Myette and Mr. LeBlanc alone, so they can increase revenue with help.

Ms. LeBlanc said volunteer hours have to be tracked to meet requirements of being a 501(c)3 organization. Mr. Bartels said they are happy to fill out forms. Mr. Menard said things change every day when running a farm, and they like the open negotiation aspect of this situation. They will coordinate with Mr. Myette and Mr. LeBlanc to make sure the work is done equitably.

84 Selectman Landau asked if there has been any communication with Bob Pepper, the
86 person previously haying the Lane Road field. Chair Sautter said she invited him to
88 attend the meeting where Mr. Bartels and Mr. Menard made their presentation, but
he did not attend. Mr. Myette said Mr. Pepper did not ask to renew the lease, and it
has expired. Chair Sautter will draft a letter explaining that the lease will not be
extended and ask him to remove his equipment by April 15th.

90
92 Ms. Reishus asked if counsel had reviewed the MOU. Mr. Myette will take it to
Town Administrator Doda and ask her to have counsel review it before the Board of
94 Selectmen meeting on Thursday.

96 Mr. Bartels and Mr. Menard said they are excited for the plan to move forward.

C. Ryan Neal – Maple sugaring

98 Nr. Neal is leasing the taps on Lane Road. He typically donates product instead of
100 paying a price per tap. In 2018, he donated \$562 worth of product. He did not donate
in the 2019-2020 season as the events he normally donates to weren't held. This
102 season, he would like to bottle the product and give it to the Advisory Committee as
a donation to be offered at other events.

104 Mr. Neal would like to renew the lease for another year. It was crucial for the
development of his business to tap that section of trees. Mr. Myette said the Trust
106 wanted to help him grow his business the first couple of years. The conditions of the
next lease would need to be discussed.

108 Selectman Landau suggested bottling the syrup for the benefit of Spring Hill Farm,
110 the 300th anniversary celebration, or the repairs at Stevens Hall. Mr. Myette said it
could be sold at Town Fair and other events under Mr. Neal's license. Mr. Neal
112 suggested using a glass bottle with a custom-designed label. The only possible delay
is they are looking at absurd lead times for packaging.

114 Mr. Myette said this would serve to raise awareness that local organizations support
116 each other. Selectman Landau said the 300th Anniversary Celebration Committee
might have an interest in purchasing product to sell. Mr. Myette said they can have
118 further discussions with Mr. Neal to move this project forward. Mr. Neal will figure
out his costs, and what he owes for the lease.

120 Mr. Myette said the lease can remain as it is until next January. Mr. Neal asked if
122 they could amend the lease so it ends after maple season. The Committee agreed.
Chair Sautter will schedule a work session with Mr. Neal before the next Committee
124 meeting.

D. Fall Fest – September 25, 2021 – Discussion

Ms. LeBlanc agreed to be the coordinator for the Fall Fest. Chair Sautter reminded the members that neighbors are often willing to lend a hand, and to reach out to them for help.

Mr. Myette said the 300th Anniversary Celebration Committee wants to add the Fall Fest to their calendar. He suggested having a theme this year, like early farm equipment. Next year, the theme could be modern farm equipment. The Committee agreed.

Ms. Reishus said the Town Fair is September 11th. The Committee hopes it will occur, but if the mandate doesn't release regarding limiting gatherings to 100 people and the mask mandate, it probably won't happen. It is not possible to monitor those mandates. Chair Sautter said they are in the same situation with the Fall Fest.

E. AARP grant with Trust – Update

Chair Sautter said the grant requires a definition of the project scope and an estimate with cost and material. The architect needs to examine the farmhouse for ADA compliance, but he has been busy. Mr. Myette suggested they might be able to get ballpark estimates from other individuals. Ms. Reishus said the building inspector listed a number of items back in 2018 that needed to be updated as a result of the fire inspection; Mr. Myette has that information. This grant application is due April 14th.

Ms. Snyder asked if, through the Trust and the easement, the buildings are required to be maintained forever at any cost. Mr. Myette said the easement is for the land, not the buildings. The Trust documents do not list that restriction. The Town expects that the buildings don't fall into total disrepair, but doesn't want to spend a lot of money on them. It is up to the Board of Selectmen as to how they want to maintain and use the buildings. Ms. Snyder thanked Chair Sautter for pursuing the grants and said she will do some research as well.

Mr. Myette said the only time there have been major concerns with the Trust and the Town has been around the rental of the buildings and the cost of maintaining them. Ms. Snyder asked if donations could be made to the Trust, since it is a 501(c)3, and used as a tax deduction. Mr. Myette said it has been done with individuals who have contributed to the Trust in the past. Selectman Landau said it is an accounting issue.

Mr. Myette said the AARP grant can be set up for a municipality or a nonprofit. The buildings are owned by the Town, but the Trust leases them. She asked if the Trust or the Town should submit the grant. It will be identified as a municipal building. The AARP wants to know how it will benefit the community. The members agreed it was preferable for the Trust to submit the grant.

IV. New Business

A. New items

1. Milkweed – Kristina

Ms. Snyder said Chester Conservation has held pollinators events, specifically about the Monarch butterfly and milkweed. The Monarch population has dropped significantly. She has seen milkweed pods at the farm. She asked if they could set up an acre with milkweed and make a wildflower garden. It would help endangered insects and also be an attraction for people, and educational for student groups.

Mr. Myette said it could be located on the two acres at the back of the pond. It would be close to the river and pond, and protected from the main farm area. Ms. Snyder will meet with individuals with expertise in this area to look at the suggested area and report to the Committee at the next meeting.

2. Boy Scout projects

Mr. Myette said there might be groups in town interested in taking on projects. The old tack shop needs new siding and a roof. The garage could be converted to a garden shed. The other garage could be converted into space to store tractors. An informational kiosk could be erected. Groups such as the Girl Scouts, Boy Scouts, or summer program participants might be interested. Contractors in town might donate services in-kind. The Committee will make a wish list of projects.

3. New Trust member

When the Trust registered with the state of New Hampshire, they were asked to increase the membership to five. Chair Sautter was asked to join the Trust and she did. She asked if the Committee members saw any issues with her remaining as the chair of the Committee, and they said no. Selectman Landau said it was a benefit for the Town, the Committee, and the Trust.

4. Farmers Markets

Ms. Reishus asked if there was any interest in holding farmers markets at Spring Hill Farm. The farm is supposed to benefit the entire community. She suggested having it the same day as the Fishing Derby, the first Saturday in June, since that brings in a lot of people.

Mr. Myette said when they held them at the church in the past, it was difficult to get the local farmers to participate since they have their own farm stands. It might be different this year with the ordinances. They will discuss it at the next meeting.

5. 300th anniversary celebration activities

Ms. Reishus said they could jointly manage the Winter Carnival in February 2022 with 300th anniversary celebration. Selectman Landau asked about the bonfire being held at Wason Pond on January 1st. He also asked about the Fireman's Muster, and erecting poles in the field at Wason Pond. He asked if there was a suitable place at the farm to hold the muster, but the Committee agreed there isn't enough room for spectators in any of the suitable locations.

Ms. Reishus said Chris Hadik is going to explore other places to hold the muster with Colin Costine.

6. Social media

Mr. Myette asked if they should establish a webpage, Facebook page, or Twitter account for the farm. People look for information and events, but they are not on the Town webpage. Chair Sautter said they can make the webpage more reflective of what's going on. Ms. LeBlanc said she can post the process for interested parties wanting to use the farm property, and the Committee agreed.

B. Review of Action Items

1. Increase membership by 2 as of June 30th – all
2. Write letter to Bob Pepper regarding the lease expiring for the fields – Beth Sautter
3. Take MOU to Town Administrator Doda to be reviewed by counsel – Chuck Myette
5. Set up meeting with Mr. Neal for April – Beth Sautter
6. Research milkweed project and find contacts by April 19 – Kristina Snyder

C. Next meeting – Monday April 19th, 2021

Ms. Reishus moved to adjourn the meeting at 8:41 PM. Ms. LeBlanc seconded the motion. A vote was taken, all were in favor, the motion passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,
Beth Haggeli, Recording Secretary