

Spring Hill Farm Advisory Committee (SHFAC)
March 18, 2024 – 7:00 p.m.
Draft Minutes

Members present:

Kristina Snyder, Chair
Mark Desiderio
Kim Rairdon
Ann Podlipny
Chuck Myette (joined at 8:15 p.m.)
Joe Biedrzycki
Ted Broadwater, Alternate

Members absent:

Colin Costine, Alternate
Stephen O. Landau, Board of Selectmen Liaison

Guests present:

Mikael Cejtin
Victor Chouinard
Chester PACT

I. Call to Order

Ms. Rairdon called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

II. Old Business

A. Attendance

B. Approval of Minutes – November 20, 2023

The Committee noted that there was no meeting in December, and there was not a quorum in January or February, so there were no minutes taken at these meetings.

Mr. Desiderio moved to accept the minutes of the November 20, 2023, meeting as written. Mr. Biedrzycki seconded the motion. A vote was taken, all were in favor except Mr. Biedrzycki, who abstained. The motion passed 5-0-1.

C. Treasurer's Report

Mr. Desiderio reported that for December, the electricity expense for the barn was \$34.45 and \$29.42 for the caretaker cottage. This left a total of \$1,887.95 in the main fund. The balance in the Advisory fund was \$413.59.

Mr. Desiderio reported that for January, there was an oil delivery at \$296.58. The electricity expense for the barn was \$50.54 and \$30.07 for the caretaker cottage. This left a total of \$1,510.76 in the main fund. The balance in the Advisory fund was \$413.59.

Mr. Desiderio reported that for February, the electricity expense for the barn was \$45.31 and \$33.40 for the caretaker cottage. Portable rental was \$150. This left a total of \$1,432.05 in the main fund. The balance in the Advisory fund was \$263.59.

Mr. Desiderio reported Accounts Receivables, in that any barn electricity cost over \$20.00 is charged back to the cattlemen. The current total is \$70.57. He will ask the Town to invoice the cattlemen for this amount.

He noted the Advisory fund is being used more proactively this year, as the cost of renting portables is being charged to this fund.

Mr. Biedrzycki asked for clarification regarding funds available to maintain the farm and support the SHFAC, which Mr. Desiderio provided. Mr. Biedrzycki asked how much is in the Trust account, which Mr. Desiderio did not know. Mr. Biedrzycki expressed confusion over why he is researching grants, if there are adequate funds to open the house. Mr. Desiderio explained his understanding is that funds exist to upgrade the farm to provide ADA accessibility. However, there are other projects that need to be undertaken.

Ms. Snyder moved to accept the Treasurer's Report as presented. Ms. Podlipny seconded the motion. A vote was taken, all were in favor. The motion passed unanimously.

D. Revisit Budget for 2024-25

Mr. Chouinard explained that no one from the Committee attended the Selectboard meeting to defend the SHFAC budget. He noted the Selectboard most likely would not approve an increase without justification. The budget is now before the Budget Committee and further cuts could be made.

Ms. Snyder said the Selectboard has been cutting budgets across the board. Mr. Desiderio submitted a budget of \$6,700, but received documentation from the Finance Department reflecting a budget of \$5,700. He reviewed the items he included in the proposed budget, which were primarily increases in oil, electricity, and portable expenses, as well as the beautification project.

Ms. Podlipny noted there is little public awareness about the farm. She said there are grants available; however, a letter of intent would probably be required that highlighted something inspiring or specific about the farm. She stressed there needs to be a level of engagement from the community and a process to achieve this.

Mr. Chouinard suggested the SHFAC query the Historical Society to determine potential interest in the farmhouse for its historical relevance to Chester.

The Committee discussed ways to engage the community with the farm. Mr. Chouinard cautioned that they need to be careful about the scope of any project undertaken. Unless there is an admission fee, it would make more work for the Town, which would fall on volunteers.

The Committee agreed the goal for the farmhouse is to open it and use it for educational meetings, a museum, etc. Ms. Snyder also noted the need to protect the land.

Mr. Broadwater pointed out the area is coming under increasing urban pressure and the farm needs to retain its rural character. He said the SHFAC needs to maintain the house and farm until there is a clear intent for the property.

The Committee agreed to hold a brainstorming session before the next Committee meeting to continue this discussion. They also discussed holding a public session in May, which they will discuss at the April meeting.

Mr. Desiderio noted it is difficult to involve the Town without having an identity and goals. Ms. Snyder suggested creating a digital survey to obtain this information. Mr. Chouinard will ask the Trust if they are willing to fund a postcard mailer with a survey, advertising the session.

E. Cattlemen Update

The cattlemen were not present to provide an update.

F. Geary Farms Update

Nick and Christy Ortins were not present to provide an update. Ms. Snyder reported the plastic blew off the High Tunnel in the recent windstorm. Plans to repair it are underway.

G. Winter Festival Review/Feedback on Event

Ms. Snyder reported the Winter Festival working group reviewed the Festival and provided feedback, as well as discussed ideas for next year's event. They felt it went well, in spite of the cold day.

H. Farmhouse Bathroom Status

Mr. Chouinard updated the Committee on the status of the farmhouse bathroom. Most of the demolition work is done, and the plumbing estimate and septic design are on file. They are waiting for the electrical, as a license is needed to pull the permit. Then, construction can begin. He thanked Sarah Desiderio for her work on the design.

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I. NH Gives

Mr. Biedrzycki reviewed NH Gives, a statewide program where a registered non-profit can solicit its constituency to make donations to them in a 24-hour period. The Committee discussed whether they would like to be involved in this program, and decided to table it until next year. Mr. Chouinard will ask the Trust if they are interested in spearheading it.

140
J. Lease Updates

Mr. Myette reported the cattlemen's lease will be up for renewal next month. The sugarbush lease has been signed for this year. The lease with the Ortins for the High Tunnel has been received from Town counsel and includes the additional activities they want to undertake. It should be signed this month.

146
K. Dog/Leash Signs

Ms. Snyder reported two signs were installed near the High Tunnel and Shepard Home Road about keeping dogs on leash. She has since seen two individuals with their dogs off leash. She noted ground-nesting birds are rapidly declining in number and more education is needed about this issue. She asked if the Ranger could patrol the property. Mr. Myette said the Ranger's hours have been increased and a discussion could be held about this. Mr. Chouinard suggested adding a sign during the sensitive seasons explaining why dogs should not be off leash.

Mr. Desiderio moved to reimburse Ms. Snyder \$82.66 for the dog/leash signs. Ms. Rairdon seconded the motion. A vote was taken, all were in favor. The motion passed unanimously.

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L. Look Ahead for the Year (goals, events)

Mr. Biedrzycki noted the difficulty in communicating goals and messages and will think about how to resolve this.

Mr. Chouinard reported a group will be holding a metal detecting event at Spring Hill Farm on June 22, 2024. Half of the proceeds from entry ticket sales will be donated to the farm.

166
M. Nomination/Voting for New Chair Position

Mr. Myette said there is still an Agriculture Committee, although they do not meet. He explained why this committee was not successful in the past and thought it could be useful to rejuvenate it. Cindy LeBlanc is currently the Ag Committee representative on the SHFAC, although it is unclear if she plans to continue in this role. Mr. Cejtin expressed interest in joining the Ag Committee. There is also an alternate slot available on the SHFAC.

176 The Committee discussed the Chair position rotating from year to year. Mr. Myette
177 noted in the past, members of the Trust have run the SHFAC and he does not believe
178 this should be done moving forward. Ms. Snyder volunteered to serve as Chair for
the near future.

180 *Mr. Myette moved to nominate Kristina Snyder as the interim Chair. Ms. Rairdon*
181 *seconded the motion. A vote was taken, all were in favor. The motion passed*
182 *unanimously.*

184 Mr. Biedrzycki asked about the logistics of minutes being approved and submitted to
185 the Town and Mr. Myette explained the process. He asked why minutes cannot be
186 changed and it was explained that once they are approved by the Committee, they
187 cannot be changed. He said the minutes serve as an action list for him and requested
188 that they be sent to the Committee members as soon as possible after the meeting.
Ms. Snyder agreed to do so.

190 **III. New Business**

192 **A. Wason Pond Wrangler**

193 Chair Snyder noted Spring Hill Farm will be the recipient of a donation from the
194 Wason Pond Wrangler proceeds. Volunteers are needed for the event, which will be
195 held on May 11, 2024.

196 **B. Any New Discussions**

198 Chair Snyder reported the Conservation Commission is sponsoring a Town-wide
200 NRI conducted by Moosewood Ecological LLC, similar to the one done at Spring
201 Hill Farm. On April 2 at 6:00 p.m., Moosewood is holding a public outreach event at
202 the Town Offices to discuss the natural resources in the community. She invited the
203 Committee members to attend.

204 The Spring Hill Farm NRI is complete. When the final report is available, it will be
205 shared with the public and with the SHFAC members.

208 **C. Next meeting – April 15, 2024**

210 **IV. Adjourn**

211 *Mr. Desiderio moved to adjourn the meeting. Ms. Rairdon seconded the motion. A vote*
212 *was taken, all were in favor. The motion passed unanimously.*

214 The meeting was adjourned at 8:55 p.m.

216 Respectfully submitted,
Beth Hanggeli, Recording Secretary