

Northampton Agricultural Commission - Minutes
7:00 PM Tuesday March 20, 2018
Planning & Sustainability, 210 Main Street, 2nd floor, City
Hall Northampton, MA

Members:

Chair John Omasta (JO)	Y	Chip Parsons (CP)	Y	Stan Zawalick (SZ)	Y
Vice Chair Rich Jaescke (RJ)	Y	Tim Smith (TS)	Y	Joe Rogers (staff) (JR)	Y
John Bobala (JB)	Y	Robert Vollinger (RV)	Y		

Also in attendance: Barbara Miller (Ashfield), Matt Kushi (Hadley), Ed Stockman (Plainfield), Anna Hanchett (Plainfield)

**** The meeting was called to order at 7:02 pm ****

1. Joint Meeting with regional Agriculture Commissions related to developing a 2019 regional meeting – *Representatives from Ashfield, Hadley, Hatfield, and Plainfield participated in a joint Agricultural Commission Meeting to start planning for a 2019 Regional Meeting. Input and participation from Franklin, Hampshire, and Hampden Counties is sought to help develop the program and host the meeting. The information below came out of this preliminary meeting. A second planning meeting will likely take place in September where commissions will once again be invited to gather. In the interim, any ideas or suggestions can be sent to jrogers@northamptonma.gov.*

- A. **Potential Topics** – *The following ideas were discussed as possible meeting topics. It was also suggested that the meeting will focus on three topics, so input from other commissions is desired to narrow the focus.*
 - i. **Local Food Self-sufficiency** – *How much land is needed, access to idle land, preservation and promotion of agriculture, resiliency to climate change and pest issues.*
 - ii. **Marijuana and Agriculture** – *Effects on eligibility for state and federal programs. Allowance on APR land. Effects on 61A status, etc.*
 - iii. **Solar and Agriculture** – *How are different communities working on the issue of proposed solar fields on agricultural land, prime or otherwise?*
 - iv. **Farm Trespassing** – *Food Safety Act information, conflicts with dog walkers, pesticide/herbicide use, illegal dumping, seasonal 4x4 mudding, etc.*
 - v. **Other Topics** – *The group would like to hear from other commissions and the agricultural users in their communities to find out which of the topics above may be the most relevant for the meeting and suggestions for other topics which may be more important locally.*
- B. **Ideas for Speakers** – *The Northampton Agricultural Commission and the other commission representatives present would like to solicit suggestions from commissions throughout the three county area for potential speakers. Ideally, we would like to identify three topics and then find one or more expert who would be willing to present on that issue. Suggestions for a moderator would also be helpful. Please contact jrogers@northamptonma.gov with any suggestions.*
- C. **Invitation of Vendors** – *The group discussed past meetings and the pros and cons of seeking out and inviting vendors. There may be some potential natural connections with vendors who may serve as an expert on a particular topic, but no one present felt strongly about the question of seeking out and inviting vendors.*
- D. **When/Where to Hold the Meeting** – *Several suggestions were made including the Smith Vocational School, Ashfield Elementary, Northampton Senior Center, etc. Ultimately, the group felt that the Smith School may provide a relatively central location with accessibility, parking, an on-site kitchen if needed, and the potential willingness to host such an event. The group thought that January or February of 2019 would be the best time frame, and potential dates of*

01/26/19, 02/02/19, or 02/09/19 were discussed to avoid national and school holidays. A timeframe of 9am to 1pm was suggested.

- E. **Available Resources** – It's expected that few Agriculture Commissions are likely to have a budget. While we believe that the event will have a small budget, some funding will be required. Ideas for funding included looking for grant opportunities, contacting Conservation Districts to request financial assistance, asking for donations, and charging a small fee to participants. All options will be explored and needs will become clearer as the program develops.*
- F. **Forming a Sub-Committee** – The group discussed the benefits of having a core group from interested commissions who could exchange ideas and information mostly through email while developing the program and setting up the event. This is an important part of the process and many voices are needed. Please contact jrogers@northamptonma.gov if you are interested in being part of this group.*
- G. **Other Business** – A survey will be developed and shared with all of the commissions to gather input about potential meeting topics. It is our hope that you can gather information from agricultural users in your community and return this information before summer.*

***** Joint Agriculture Commission Meeting was ended at 8:05 pm, Northampton Agricultural Commission Meeting continued starting at 8:10 pm *****

- 2. Public Comment – There were no members of the public present during the meeting.*
- 3. Approval of Agricultural Commission minutes of February 27, 2018 – A motion to accept the 02/27/18 minutes was made by RJ and seconded by JO. All were in favor.*
- 4. Possible engagement and meeting with Smith Vocational School Future Farmers of America (FFA) – The commission would like to invite leaders of the Smith FFA to attend the April 24, 2018 Agricultural Commission meeting to learn about the role of the commission and for the commission to hear about what the FFA students are interested in and how they can be of assistance. Tim Smith will contact Beth Wilson (FFA advisor) about setting up the meeting.*
- 5. Update if needed on City-owned agricultural properties*
 - Bleiman: Vacant – JR created a new flier for distribution to attract a potential user. The commission discussed the property and ideas for uses including pasture and horticulture along with the pros and cons of targeting adjacent properties to create a larger agricultural property.*
 - Elwell: DeWitt – Happy Valley Organics – JR visited the property and contacted the tenants. All brush has been removed from the center of the field, some taken off site and the rest stockpiled off of the agricultural fields. The remaining brush will be hogged this season.*
 - Mineral Hills: Mayval Farm – An email was sent to Mayval Farm to ask about planting plans for the upcoming season.*
 - Montview: MCCC*
 - Cross Path Road: Not yet contacted*
 - Broad Brook (Linseed Road): Vacant – JR created a new flier for distribution to attract a potential user.*
- 6. Any other necessary business not established when agenda set – The commission discussed the upcoming PVGrows Forum on April 7th and a flyer was printed for distribution. The commission also discussed hosting an informational meeting related to the Food Safety Act. It was decided that November would be a good time to hold the meeting if the speaker was available. JFK community room was suggested as a good potential meeting place.*
- 7. Set next meeting date – The next meeting will be held on 04/24/18. The first portion of the meeting will be a joint meeting with Smith Vocational School FFA members.*
- 8. Adjourn – A motion to adjourn was made by RJ and seconded by CP at 9:05 pm.*