

Concord Agriculture Committee
Thursday, February 7th, 2019 7:00 pm
Assessor's Office, 24 Court Lane

Present:

Brian Cramer, member
Happy Goethert, chair
Lise Holdorf, clerk
Emily Wheeler, member
Chip Poutasse, visitor, Brigham Farm
Melissa Maxwell, visitor, Barrett's Mill Farm

Meeting called to order at 7:10

January Minutes

Minutes were approved as amended.

News about farmers

There are a number of upcoming farming-related events. Friday, March 8th at 3pm there is a forum at MIT called Smallholder Farming: Strategies for Sustainability and Resilience. It appears to be geared more toward developing countries. There is a forum in Acton on Wednesday, Feb 13th 3-5pm called "Growing Locally: Open Space, Farms & Housing: Is There Room For All?" Melissa Maxwell is attending and she noted that when she RSVPed it sounded like the attendance would be high.

Melissa and Happy went to a MAGIC (Minuteman Advisory Group on Interlocal Coordination) forum in Boxborough. Brad Mitchell of the MA Farm Bureau and Cheryl Sbarra of the MA Association of Health Boards were the speakers. They are working together to provide technical assistance to farmers on complying with the local boards of health and helping to mediate between Boards of Health and farmers.

The annual SEMAP farming conference is in Dighton on Feb 24th and the Harvest New England farm marketing conference is on February 27th and 28th. There is a focus group at lunchtime on the 27th on how climate change affects farming in New England.

March 7th MDAR is holding a talk on succession planning in Leominster.

Ricky Marshall will be speaking at the Seed Lending Library opening on March 7th and Melissa is speaking on March 23rd.

Lise spoke at MCI Concord on January 28th. Dan Giurleo from Colonial Gardens works with inmates from the farm and has had a very good experience. Emily shared that Debra's have hired people on work release. Oftentimes the challenge for folks post-release is finding an affordable place to live nearby so that they can continue working in Concord.

Chip Poutasse brought up the letters that all farm stands in town received from the Board of Health about new regulations. Honey, eggs, uncut vegetables, and maple products are exempt from needing any new permits, but if farm stands wish to sell anything else (dairy, milk, jam, bread, etc.) they will need to apply for a Limited Retail License or a Food Establishment Permit. Hutchins Farm will have to apply for a waiver to sell frozen meat. They will probably discontinue selling refrigerated pickles as they are not shelf stable. The application for Limited Retail

License is due March 1st. Jams and jellies need to be produced by an establishment that has a wholesale license.

Passport details and structure

Happy suggested waiting to launch the new 2019 farm passport in May or June once farm stands are open. She also suggested writing an article for the Concord Journal to promote the passport program and all the farm stands. Questions were raised about how the passport would work, including whether there should be a \$10 minimum purchase in order to get a stamp, and whether there should be a separate column for a stamp if you attend an event or volunteer. Brian suggested there not be a minimum dollar amount and that participants should just need to make a purchase, attend a tour or volunteer. CSA members don't need to make a separate purchase to get a stamp as they have already made a large investment in the farm. There will be a minimum of 7 stamps to qualify to be entered in the raffle for a reward. Each person will only get 1 stamp per farm, no matter how many visits. Also, it would be 1 stamp per visit per family. Some of the reward ideas are: farm bucks or one free CSA pick-up. There should also be an Ag Day line in the passport which could be stamped at the Ag Committee table at the market. It was agreed that 3 winners should be chosen.

Happy talked to Heather at Town Hall to find out how much money is in the Ag Committee account. The Stone Soup grant went into the Agriculture Committee Gift account. There is currently \$1,600 in the account. Most of the money from that account (\$1,300) is owed to the Stone Soup Committee, as it is the unspent money from the Food, Farm and Garden Fair. Checks from the Ag committee account are being issued today to reimburse Barrett's Mill and Verrill Farm for the farm bucks that were redeemed in their stands from the Passport 2018 program. Brigham and Hutchins need to submit W-9s to the Town in order for the Town to process invoices for the farm bucks. W-9s need to go to Melissa Simard (they can be emailed to msimard@concordma.gov). Happy will get an instruction guide emailed to her for how to submit for reimbursements in the future.

Chip asked if the plan was still for the Stone Soup grant to be start-up funds for Ag Day, with the Ag Committee working on recruiting sponsors for future Ag days. Emily said the event is being scaled back and the Ag Committee won't be looking for as much funding in the future. For future publicity, Emily noted that the Town had been using a digital highway sign at the corner of Main St. & Sudbury Rd. to advertise for the Recreation Department's Winter Wonderland event. Perhaps the Town would agree to do the same for future Ag Days too.

Emily and Happy will send the Ag Day budget to Stone Soup. Chip was asked if Stone Soup would like to continue to be involved in funding the Ag Day market. Chip said he sees Stone Soup as the "fundraising branch" for the Ag Committee, separate from the Town.

The following farms need to be asked about participating in the farm passport program (the person who will ask is listed in parentheses): Gaining Ground (Melissa), Marshall (Emily), Saltbox (Melissa), Silferleaf (Brian), Farm at Walden Woods (Brian - Lise and Melissa will try if Brian can't get in touch with them), Colonial Gardens (Emily), Millbrook (Emily), Scimone (Happy), and Rotondo (Happy).

Media update - Instagram

Melissa reported that switching between managers of the "farmsofconcord" Instagram account is a long process. Melissa worked out with JoAnn Lovejoy how to transfer the account to her phone, but in the future it would be easier if we had access to the Ag Committee email address in order to do so. No one knows the email password. In the past, the Town has set up

forwarding to the Ag committee Chair each year. Happy is working on talking to Erin (Public Information Officer for the Town) to fix the email issue.

There are now 83 followers of the Instagram account. Concord businesses are starting to like it. Melissa has followed the other farms in Town who have Instagram accounts, and in the future she can more easily repost their posts. Melissa would like some guidance on how to decide what accounts to follow.

Ricky Marshall had asked Emily how to post something to the farmsofconcord Instagram account. Melissa said that he can't post directly, but he can send Melissa a photo or Melissa can repost what he has already posted.

It was decided that there doesn't need to be themes - people generally don't post really similar photos one after another on Instagram. However, you can compile a bunch of theme pictures into one post.

One thing to keep in mind as the account gets more followers is that people will start commenting on photos and the committee will need to keep up with acknowledging comments.

Spring Forum

The forum is set for March 21st at 7pm at Harvey Wheeler. Happy thought 3 chefs and 2 farmers on the panel would work. There has been a commitment from Cheese Shop and strong interest from Papa Razzi and Saltbox. Steve will ask Newbury Court. Some of the questions for the chefs are: How do they approach designing menus with seasonal food component? How does seasonal produce availability change how they cook over the course of the year? Brian says Woods Hill Table still needs to be approached - he will try to get in touch with the owner. Emily will approach Saltbox. She has been in touch with Allison at Saltbox.

While discussing storage crops for winter consumption, Brian noted that Butterkin held better than regular butternut for Hutchins

Advertising for the forum. Lise will create a flyer and a smaller version for social media posts. We should also try to publicize the event in the Concord CAN newsletter, Concord Journal, Town News and Notices and the Concord-Carlisle Food Collaborative. Lise requested photos to use for the publicity.

We need to pin down forum participants by the end of next week.

Farmer storytelling for a future forum? Mr. Rotondo, Bill Kenney and Chip Poutasse are all potential storytellers.

Public comments

Next chair breakfast is February 20th and Happy can't make it. Emily will attend.

Next meeting March 14th

Meeting adjourned at 9:05pm

Minutes submitted by Lise Holdorf

Minutes approved Happy Goethert, Chair March 14, 2019

