

Great Barrington Agricultural Commission Meeting Minutes:

Meeting date and location: 1/30/13 at Berkshire Grown Office

Meeting began: 4pm

Members present: Luke Pryjma, Vivian Orłowski, Barbara Zheutlin and Frederic Gordon

Discussed:

1. Great Barrington Master Plan Committee: Agricultural Subcommittee Report (attached)

2. "Lawns Into Gardens" Mark Bittman," NYTimes

<http://opinionator.blogs.nytimes.com/2013/01/29/lawns-into-gardens/?em>

3. "Outlines of a Food Revolution," (*The Town That Food Saved*) Los Angeles Times

<http://articles.latimes.com/2010/may/27/food/la-fo-artisanbook-20100527>

4. Vermont Farm Resilience in a Changing Climate

<http://nofavt.org/annual-events/winter-conference/workshops/vermont-farm-resilience-changing-climate>

5. "UMass Students Break New Ground in Sustainability" Boston Globe

<http://www.bostonglobe.com/lifestyle/food-dining/2012/04/24/breaking-new-ground-sustainability-umass/1H2qmvMDIfPLA8f3xaZLoJ/story.html?camp=pm>

6. Drafted Letter 1 to Great Barrington Sustainability Meeting

Report on Sustainable Agriculture in Great Barrington by The Great Barrington Agricultural Commission

As defined by the Great Barrington Agricultural Commission:

Sustainable agriculture is agriculture that is healthy for our local economy, our local environment and our community for generations to come.

Keep Berkshires Farming, Sustainable Berkshires and the Great Barrington Agricultural Commission together have studied

agricultural sustainability extensively.

The Great Barrington Agricultural Commission believes the greatest agricultural sustainability measure we could take would be to feed ourselves more from our own land. Nationally, the amount of food grown and consumed locally is less than 4%. In terms of sustainability this number is disturbing. However, there is much potential for growth of local food.

We surveyed and studied our region: Great Barrington, Sheffield, Mount Washington, Egremont and Alford.

Below are key points of our agricultural assessment:

Most farmers said the ‘buy local’ movement has positively impacted their farm.

Labor, fuel and access to farmland were the top three concerns of farmers.

Most residents surveyed were interested in more local meat.

Most restaurants surveyed were interested in more local meat.

We could better meet our emergency food needs.

Future Goals for Agricultural Sustainability:

Economic incentives to grow food for local consumption

More local food in schools and institutions

More local value added production sites with favorable regulations

More public market space for local food

More access to both public and private land for farmers

Support a strong agricultural component of the Fair Grounds
Redevelopment Project
Strong food security for times of crises and to support those with
less access to food
Address farm labor needs
Farmer to farmer networking
Farm viability help and farmer education
Promote small scale agriculture and cottage gardens*
Slaughter and meat processing access and policy
Low-input four-season agriculture
Protect long term soil viability, local sourcing and human health by
reducing dependence on industrial pesticides, herbicides, fertilizers
and GMO seeds
We do not support hydraulic fracturing (fracking) because of
human, agricultural and environment health concerns
Develop educational outlets for the next agricultural generation
Land and farmer succession
Overall expanding agricultural market potential

Co-sponsored Goals of Great Barrington Agricultural Commission and Keep Berkshires Farming:

Education: 7-9 classes on topics that our agricultural assessment
revealed as most important to our local agriculture.

Action: Follow through with momentum of classes to reestablish
our agriculture infrastructure through policy change and action.

Education:

Slaughter and Meat Processing Education: January 19th, 2013.
Completed. 50 plus people attended our informative lecture. We

will follow through with policy and action to make local meat production more feasible.

Food Processing Education: Lecture will be at 3-4:30pm, February 25th, 2013 at the Berkshire Athenaeum. Jim Hyland of Winter Sun Farm and Micheal Tesoro will speak on their experience in food processing.

Farm Networking Education: Lecture will be 7-8:30pm, March 11th, 2013 at the First Baptist Chrch in Pittsfield. Noah Fulmer of Rhode Island's widely successful Farm Fresh model will be speaking.

Farm To School Education: April 2013. Speaker and location to be determined.

Luke Pryjma

Great Barrington Agricultural Commission Chair

Keep Berkshires Farming Southern Berkshire Chair

Sustainable Berkshires Agricultural Committee Member

Northeast Organic Farming Association of Massachusetts Board Member

7. Drafted Letter 2 for the Great Barrington Sustainability Meeting

A Report on Sustainable Agriculture in Great Barrington and Solar

Installations in Pastures by the Great Barrington Agricultural Commission

As defined by the Great Barrington Agricultural Commission:

Sustainable agriculture is agriculture that is healthy for our local economy, our

local environment and our community for generations to come.

Of farms responding to the Keep Berkshires Farming study we found 6% of our total farmland is in pasture.*

The Great Barrington Agricultural Commission's stance on solar installations in pastures is as follows.

'Pastures of Plenty', by John E. Carroll, is a valuable agricultural sustainability study of four states: Vermont, Maine, New Hampshire and Massachusetts.

'Pastures of Plenty' is book two of a three-book study. It is a New Hampshire Agricultural Experiment Station publication.

One of the central themes of this study is:

“That New England has the soils, climate and geographical circumstances, as well as the cultural heritage, to support a strong grass-based agriculture, an agriculture producing significant amounts (in fact, copious amounts) of meat and dairy product as well as a wide range of mixed vegetables, some grains, and

many specialty food products, and should, therefore, reinstitute a supporting infrastructure to do so.”

The Great Barrington Agricultural Commission believes that if Gre

at Barrington is to be agriculturally sustainable, solar installations on existing pastures should not be encouraged unless the guidelines below are met. All guidelines should be

approved by the Great Barrington Agricultural Commission, the Conservation Commission and an agreed upon independent pasture consultant.

Guidelines for Solar Installation in Pastures

Transmission of light

Silvopasture is the grazing of cattle under trees for both timber and meat. Grazing

underneath solar installations is similar to silvopasture. Solar-grazing needs to

meet the light requirements of silvopasture. A minimum of 60% of natural wavelength light (unfiltered by solar glass technology) is needed to grow pasture

to support cattle. To be approved by the Great Barrington Agricultural

Commission a pasture solar installation footprint would need to meet this transmission of light requirement.

Compaction

Compaction will destroy a healthy pasture. To be approved by the Great

Barrington Agricultural Commission within three years of a pastur

e solar

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installation, compaction levels must return to existing levels as measured by a

soil penetrometer.

Mature Pasture

Pastures have standards. Before a solar installation the pasture must be assessed by an agreed upon pasture consultant. To restore proper pasture quality and prevent scarring, the quality of pasture after three years must meet or exceed the initial pasture assessment.

Study of the Impacts of Solar on Herd Health

Even though a technology is green doesn't ensure that it is healthy to be around.

To be approved by the Great Barrington Agricultural Commission a pasture solar installation health assessment needs to be undertaken by an agreed upon livestock consultant.

Our pastures are one of our areas greatest natural resources. We would only support solar installations on them if rigorous guidelines for pasture and ecological health were enforced. With our existing pastures, we feel there is much potential under successful grazing management plans to support

port an
agriculture that looks beautiful and is healthy for the local economy, the
environment, the community and future generations.

In 'Pastures of Plenty', Carroll goes on to reinforce that productive
open-land is
what pulls at the heartstrings of our tourist based economy. Properly
managed
intensive grazing is beautiful, is economically viable and is one of the most
ecological forms of farming. The use of pastures for managed intensive grazing

meets the Great Barrington Agricultural Commissions definition of
sustainability.

Solar installations in pastures, unless heavily regulated, do not. The
most
sustainable use of our pastures is properly managed grazing.

Luke Pryjma

Great Barrington Agricultural Commission Chair
Keep Berkshires Farming Southern Berkshire Chair
Sustainable Berkshires Agricultural Committee Member
Northeast Organic Farming Association of Massachusetts Board Member

*This includes Great Barrington, Sheffield, Mount Washington, Egremont and Alford.