

Minutes of the Agricultural Advisory Commission

October 28, 2010

Meeting held in the Town Hall meeting room

Members present: Frank Carlson, Candy Frazer, Peter Basile, Bill Barrett, Pam Browning, Wendell Willard

Also present: Ted Maxant, Phil Rymsha, David Coffin, Paul Willard, Don and Karen Green

The meeting was called to order at 7:30 p.m.

Old Business: Several items were briefly reviewed: Frank Carlson will make sure that Sean Bilodeau submits a letter of resignation so that Ag. Com. can move forward with the recommendation to the Selectmen that Tim Arnold be appointed to take his place. Frank will also check with the printer he knows about the cost of printing brochures. As to the six proposed “right to farm” signs on roads entering town, the Commission agreed on the need to control the placement of signs so that they can be easily seen. (Some of Bolton’s signs are hard to see and difficult to read.) Pam Browning handed out summaries of the changes to Chp. 40-A to allow for small plot farming on parcels as small as two acres.

New Business: U-pick signs: Wendell Willard summarized the discussion at the Selectmen’s meeting on Oct. 19 concerning a complaint received by Tim Bragan. One U-pick operator felt that another U-pick farm had put up too many signs. Details of the complaint were not made public, but the BOS directed Ag. Com. to revisit the idea of limiting the number of signs. The discussion included comments by several U-pick farmers in attendance. It was decided not to recommend a specific limit on the number of signs at this time, although the U-pick farmers agreed that ten signs per farm would be suitable upper limit. There was a general feeling that discussing an issue arising from a complaint was impossible without knowing the details. Ag. Com. members agreed that such complaints should be directed to the Commission first, before appearing on the agendas of the BOS or any other boards. Discussion also involved the idea of Ag. Com. assuming some of the U-pick sign permitting duties in the future, both to relieve the Selectmen of the work, and to head off possible conflicts or complaints at the outset. Further discussion is planned for the next meeting, to which Tim Bragan and Tim Clark will be invited.

Conservation Land- leasing Policy: There has been some concern about Con. Com.’s policies on “leasing” conservation lands to farmers. Because State law requires Con Com. to issue only annual

licenses to farmers, not long-term leases, it is feared that some traditional farmers who have invested time and money into improving the lands they use may lose their licenses to farm these parcels in favor of new communal or “hobby” farmers. Paul Willard of Con Com. stated that the Commission’s policy was to insure that traditional farmers have priority, but that the leasing arrangements had become confused over the years, and needed clarification. Frank Carlson said that there is a legal way to get around the one-year license requirement to insure long-term use by traditional farmers. Bill Barrett will draft a letter to Con. Com. stating Ag. Com.’s position that traditional farmers be given all protections possible to their continued use of conservation lands. Ag. Com. will review this letter at its next meeting, and send it to Con Com. Paul Willard stated that Con. Com. would welcome this advice from Ag. Com.

Election of officers: Election of new officers was postponed to the next meeting, where it will be the first order of business.

The meeting adjourned at 8:48 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Wendell Willard

