

Lee Agricultural Commission

November 29, 2016

Present: Erick Sawtelle, Dick Babcock, Dwight Barney, Donna-Lee Woods, Chuck Cox, Jonathan Kohanski, Paul Gasowski, Amanda Gourgue and Laura Gund

Selectmen's Representative Cary Brown was also present.

Minutes: The minutes of the November 1st meeting were accepted as read.

Backyard Farming: We discussed giving a donation to the NH Farm Museum as Mark Foynes, of the Farm Museum, will be part of the next Backyard Farming presentation. The schedule is as follows: January 23rd: "Looking Back: History of Land Use in Lee 1700-1850", Mark Foynes and Laura Gund; February 27th: "Changes in Land Use 1850-2000", Randy Stevens, Phil Sanborn, Jere Beckman; March 27th: "Present Use, local farms 2000-2017", Brian Ferguson, Flag Hill, Lorraine Merrill, Agricultural Commissioner, John Hutton, Coppal House Farm; April 24th: "Looking forward – 2017 Innovations in Farming: with Dorn Cox, Dan Winans, Becky Sideman; May 22nd: "Farming in Lee: round table discussion". Chuck moves that we *give a \$50 donation to the New Hampshire Farm Museum for our speaker at the next program*. Dwight 2nds and the motion is approved.

Farmers Market: Dick Babcock came to this meeting in order to discuss the Lee Farmers Market with the Commission. Recently market numbers have been down statewide – from more than 80 markets to 77. He said the reason vendors are leaving is "help", lack of produce, fewer customers. Why fewer customers? Grocery stores are competing more, hot weather, lack of vendors. This summer was tough for growers as it was so dry. We had 16 vendors, which is good. The by-laws are now 10 years old. We discussed securing tents so they can't blow away. Dick agreed to have pre-season meetings and to go another year to see if it improves. Where does the market stand in relation to the Agricultural Commission? The vendors wondered if they should leave the Commission. It's to the market's advantage to remain part of the town by being associated with the Commission. Then we discussed other sites and their advantages. However, a survey Tina Sawtelle has done indicates that people like the market where it is. So they have decided to stay in the same spot, on town land. Donna-Lee feels more kids' activities would be helpful. There are many things that can be done to entice folks. More advertising would probably help, such as posters at the local campgrounds. Magnets with market dates. When we first started the markets our first goal was to increase opportunities for farmers and the second goal was to make produce available to Lee folks. What do we want the market to be at this time? Erick made a few comments at the end of Dick's presentation: 1) When we originally wrote the by-laws we were not a Commission yet, just a committee; 2) the Vendors should make a commitment to the market and perhaps there should be a schedule for vendors to put up signs, etc.; and 3) Have chefs come to cook, advertise the market on the Farm Bureau weekly schedule page, everybody has to work together and perhaps send out a letter with the schedule.

Paul asked about the by-laws – who changes them? He would like every vendor to have Product Liability. Dwight remarked that we are the "umbrella", not the ones who are running the market. Erick thinks it would behoove us to make insurance a necessity, to protect the town. Cary stated that he would check with the Town Administrator to have her check in with Primex (insurance carrier) about liability since food is involved. She could also find out what other towns require. We discussed tents and

the problems associated with them. Donna-Lee said we have no requirements to have them weighted down. That will be changed this year apparently.

Planning for the coming year:

- 1) It was agreed that we should co-sponsor with Strafford County Farm Bureau once again to have a Pancake Breakfast in March.
- 2) Backyard Farming should continue as it is, working with the library.
- 3) Flag Hill would like another local produce supper. Further discussion is necessary.
- 4) Lee Fair in September.
- 5) A newsletter – Dwight and others would like to see a newsletter sent out.
- 6) A magnet with the schedule of Farmers Market and the Backyard Farming Initiative.

Miscellaneous conversations: Paul brought up Bed & Breakfasts. We have a couple of them coming into town. As a commission is there anything we can/should do?

Farm worker housing.

Country Days. Paul mentioned Durham Ag. Days where they recognize folks who raise gardens and animals.

Next meeting: December 27, 2016

Minutes submitted by Laura Gund.