

Hollis Agricultural Commission

Thursday, January 14th, 2021



NAMES OF ATTENDEES

M. Post, T. Hardy, D. Harmon, M. Madden, C. Husk.

CALL TO ORDER

Meeting called to order at 7:35pm.

ORDER OF BUSINESS

I. New Business

a. Luminary Debrief

- I. The consensus was the distribution and clean-up were efficient. T. Hardy stated that next time we could simply have a small group of 6-8 people make the luminaries since it was so efficient. D. Harmon stated that the luminaries seemed not as bright this year. T. Hardy mentioned perhaps due to the discoloration of the bags from prolonged storage of the sand. The Town website had pictures and there was a lot of ambient light. M. Madden proposed increasing safety with barricades or signs and using additional volunteers for traffic management.

b. 2020 Town Report

- I. RSA does not require the report to include the amount of rent regarding agricultural leases. These leases are available on the Town website if that information is desired. D. Harmon would like to propose that the lease includes the statement that lease payments the town receives meet, or exceed, the amount property taxes due. M. Post motioned to accept the report, as amended. T. Hardy second, motion passed 5-0-0.

II. Unfinished Business

a. Current Use

- I. Farmers currently receive letters stating that property is in current use. T. Hardy questioned how the town is receiving current information about the status of land. The town could be using obsolete information.
- II. Chuck Souther is the chairperson of the current use board at the state level. T. Hardy suggested contacting Mr. Souther for ideas, e.g. review state definitions and tiers of taxing value of agricultural land. The premise is that the more intensive or productive the land is the lower the tax rate should be. This is designed to encourage agriculture. The town needs a better method of communicating to with farmers the status of their land. M. Post stated the first step is ensuring the town has good data in order to have effective output. M. Post stated he will try and schedule something with the town assessor. T. Hardy mentioned querying Mr. Souther on how different towns utilize different tax structures relating to land, current use, buildings, e.g. if a barn is attached to a house is it taxed as 1 structure, as in a large house? T. Hardy stated that Rob Johnson works with Mr. Souther and could be an additional contact.

b. Living With Agriculture

- I. M. Post and T. Dufresne discussed the need to have the annual review complete of the Woodmont West lease to establish a position on the topic of grasshopper sparrows, and their conservation, as Nichols-Smith will want to address the topic this spring. M. Post stated it is important to highlight the fact that the easement clearly indicates that agricultural use takes precedence. Discussion continued with an observation that the Ag Comm and the Lessee are not in favor of a formal designation of a birding habitat. There would be access issues and foot traffic problems. The Lessee is not opposed to the sparrows, just a formal designation, and in fact there is currently an area that birds

could live undisturbed. Mr. Gerry Coffey is the point of contact for Nichols-Smith which monitors the easement. The easement is owned by the town and state.

- II. Publication initiative regarding Stefanowicz: The Lessee is not ready to provide updates, but requests the foot traffic and access concerns be addressed. Highlighting the progression of change is a good subject, e.g. to inform the community that trees will be cut, etc., as those activities could be perceived as undesirable. All-terrain vehicle access needs to be addressed as well. M. Post suggested meeting with the conservation commission to decide how and where signs that restrict traffic would go up. The location of the 4 parking spots requested by town with gate was discussed and is being planned.

- c. Recruiting

- I. M. Post has had a few calls with prospective members. Equestrian interest would help diversify. The goal is to have at least 3 members directly involved with agricultural. The new member can be from either representation.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

M. Post motioned to accept the public minutes for the commission meeting on December 12th, 2020, D. Harmon second, motioned passed 5-0-0.

M. Post motioned to accept the non-public minutes for the commission meeting on December 12th, 2020, D. Harmon second, motioned passed 5-0-0.

ADJOURNMENT

M. Post motioned to adjourn at 8:29, D. Harmon second, motion passed 5-0-0.

Respectfully submitted by M. Madden, Secretary