

Northampton Agricultural Commission - Minutes

7:00 PM Tuesday January 30, 2018

**Planning & Sustainability, 210 Main Street, 2nd floor, City Hall
Northampton, MA**

Members:

Chair John Omasta (JO)	✓	Chip Parsons (CP)	☒	Stan Zawalick (SZ)	✓
Vice Chair Rich Jaescke (RJ)	✓	Tim Smith (TS)	✓	Joe Rogers (staff) (JR)	✓
John Bobala (JB)	✓	Robert Vollinger (RV)	☒		

1. Public comment – *There were no members of the present.*
2. Approval of Agricultural Commission minutes of November 21, 2017 – *A motion to approve the 11/21/17 minutes was made by RJ and seconded by RV. All were in favor.*
3. Review of letter and materials for distribution to agriculture users related to shade tree procedures – *JR shared with the commission a draft letter for distribution that would provide information to agricultural users in Northampton about the current shade tree procedures. The commission agreed that the letter should be sent out to people with agricultural interests in Northampton as soon as possible. JR also distributed a list of agricultural users that was generated through web searches and adding landowners with properties in Chapter 61. JB motioned to distribute the draft letter, RJ seconded and all were in favor.*
4. Planning related to hosting 2018’s annual Agriculture Commission regional meeting and the potential of UMass student volunteer help – *JR reported that a flier had been drafted and distributed at the Stockbridge School back in December, but that no students have been in contact as of yet. JO contacted Pete Westover who managed last year’s meeting and received a copy of his notes and contact information. The commission discussed the upcoming State Annual Agriculture Commission meeting (MAAC) on 02/24/18 and the possibility of some members attending. The commission decided that it might be best to skip a regional meeting this year, make some new contacts at the State meeting and develop some topics. The commission also agreed to put the meeting on the agenda of the first fall meeting next year and look again for student help for organizing. RJ suggested that the commission invite representatives from some local AgComs early this spring to begin discussing the concept of a regional meeting for 2019 and develop some closer relationships with local committees.*
5. Update on City-owned agricultural properties
 - Mineral Hills - Mayval Farm: *The commission discussed the use of the small western portion of this property and their desire to see it stay in agriculture. They suggested inquiring about crop plans from the tenant.*
 - Broad Brook (Linseed Road): *The potential users of the hay fields at this property as recommended by the commission have been contacted, but have not responded at this time.*

6. Discussion related to Solar Massachusetts Renewable Target Program – *The commission discussed a recent article in the Daily Hampshire Gazette from 01/22/18. The article was about grants available for farmers through the Solar Massachusetts Renewable Target program. The grants are the result of experiments at UMass to test the effects of high ground mounted solar panels on crops and animals. The system is being promoted as a viable option for pasture and crop areas where no large equipment is used. The commission was interested in the technology but had questions about where it could be beneficial in Northampton and how it would fit within the City’s PV ordinance.*
7. Any other necessary business not established when agenda set – *The commission discussed the concept and precedent of Agricultural Commissions owning properties and whether that is a direction that this commission would like to investigate.*
8. Set next meeting date – *Tuesday February 27, 2018 at 7:00 PM.*
9. Adjourn – *Adjournment at 8:14 pm. RJ motioned and seconded by JB, all in favor.*