

Agricultural Commission Meeting Minutes

Meeting Date: 12/16, 2019

Commission Members Present: Sighle Philbin (Chair), Daniel Mercurio (co-chair), Kate Simmarano, Amy Marold, James Amaral

Commission Members Absent: Mollynda McArthur

Others Present: Don Varney, Mike Pineo (MAAC), Tom Dillon (Board of Health), Steve Jones (Animal Inspector/Control Officer)

Called to order 6:30 pm (move to order: Sighle; second: Amy)

Topic:

Review and Approve minutes from November 19th meeting:

- Sighle makes a motion to accept minutes, Jim seconds. Unanimously passes

Discuss Board of Health Farm Regulations:

Daniel cited that during recent conversations with individuals involved with State agricultural commissions, that any proposed regulations can and should be simple.

Ag Comm identified “targets” that the Board of Health would like to see executed. These include: roosters, excessive chicken odors, dense neighborhoods and record keeping. A proposal was made for residents to submit to the Board of Health, in census form, a record of all the non-commercial farm animals that were kept during the previous calendar year. Once collected, this information would be given to the Animal Inspector for him/her to submit this information to the State. Steve Jones supported this idea as a means to allow the Town and the State be aware of what animals are where.

A suggestion was made to create a permitting process for farm animal owners on parcels of land that are less than 0.50 acres. This would remain consistent with all complaints (other than roosters).

Discussion ensued between Mike Pineo and the Commission regarding nuisances, specifically the differences between legal farms and dense neighborhoods.

Sighle inquired with Steve Jones what the protocol is for handling barking dog nuisance complaints. Steve answered that this is a case by case basis.

A suggestion was made to permit all roosters in town, regardless of parcel size. Kate and Don stated they have approached neighbors in the past to discuss their roosters.

Tom believes in simple and basic regulations, but sees the need to have something formattable to “sink their teeth into”. He does not believe civil or legal avenues are not ideal to pursue. Even though Boards of Health have powers under Mass General Laws 111 to remedy any nuisance case, it becomes a costly and lengthy process. It was stated that the State is currently making a push to expand the powers of local Boards of Health.

Kate asked who would be the one to perform the site assessments, Tom stated it would fall on the Health Agent.

Daniel commented that any issues related to wetlands would refer to existing DCR watershed jurisdiction maps.

Tom wonders if another public hearing may be required to adopt suggested regulations from the Ag Comm. It was stated it may be an easier “sell” to town residents if proposed regulations are supported by the Ag Comm.

Unforeseen Business:

- Mike Pineo offered updates on State affairs regarding agriculture:
 - Senate bill 1268 and House Bill 1856
 - An act requiring Boards of Health to seek input from Agricultural Commissions regarding any regulations for agriculture in that municipality
 - MAAC Annual Meeting
 - February 22, 2020 – 10:30 am
 - Holiday Inn, Marlborough: Costs around \$30-40
 - Mike suggested appealing to the Town to create an Ag Comm line item in the budget

Amy motion to adjourn, Sighle second 8:05 pm