



## **Agricultural Advisory Board**

### **Remote Meeting Minutes**

**4/15/20**

Meeting came to order at 7:01 PM

Attending: Tony Beattie, Ken Hartlage, David Sears, Sherrill Rosoff, (Lucy McKain entered late.)

Non-Board members attending: Renee D'Argento, Margaret Scarsdale, Eric and Emily Piper

David Sears motioned to approve, and Sherrill Rosoff seconded, 4/4/20 meeting minutes. Motion passed unanimously.

Discussion began regarding the special permit requirement being placed on the Maker Farm. Tony Beattie reported he had spoken with Al Patenaud regarding the legality of the Planning Board setting limits on the Maker Farm's equestrian facility. Al Patenaud responded that the stable license allows you to board, stable horses but holding an equestrian event requires a permit; he further thought that at Maker Farm there were more non-farm programs than farm activity.

Emily Piper responded by saying that she contacted the head of the Mass Dept. of Agricultural Resources Equine Board in charge of stabling licensing (Michael Gold). She asked him specifically about story times and other camp related activities. He responded to her via email saying that the stabling license permits her farm any activities that are "safe for humans and horses." She also said that the Maker Farm is not a competitive barn; they don't hold horse shows or other equine events.

It is the Agricultural Advisory Board's opinion that our local Right to Farm and the State's Dover Amendment supersedes any special permitting requirements. Emily Piper said that she and Eric may know by the end of the day Friday about what the special permit outcome will be; both their lawyer and the Town Counsel are negotiating a set of terms to propose to the Pipers. Her concern is that the terms will be so strict that she and Eric will not be able to make a living. She also noted that it's very common in other towns for children's camps to be zoned residential; perhaps getting in touch with Kalene Gendron of Nashoba Board of Health would provide additional information.

Ken Hartlage noted that our letter should urge the Planning Board to give the special permit and that it shouldn't impose on the Pipers changes to their business model. Emily Piper noted that other towns have agricultural zoning but in Pepperell farms fall into residential zoning. She said it was beyond belief that

the Planning Board doesn't accept the Dover Amendment but that she and Eric had no plan to appeal the Planning Board decision. They are out of funds and out of time.

Ken Hartlage noted that it seems Town Counsel had incomplete information but that the Planning Board was being swayed by his letter anyway. What would it take to revisit the original legal opinion? Town Counsel did acknowledge that he didn't have a complete understanding of the Piper's business. What we need to do is describe their business plan in a way that would advantage the Pipers. We could then ask the Planning Board to revisit Town Counsel's decision - to "take another look." The central question is whether the Planning Board wants to be more restrictive than the State; that local control supersedes State law (Dover Amendment)? He further noted that Town Counsel will not want to take the risk of an error of law if the Dover Amendment applies. Tony Beattie said that he would try to put this strategy in front of the Planning Board. Sherrill Rosoff agreed to make a first draft of a letter to the Planning Board.

Discussion turned to the Peter Fitz and what the initial start up costs of a commercial kitchen would be - a key component are the utility costs of a fully functional kitchen. Renee D'Argento asked whether it was possible to create a cooperative in which members would have a certain number of hours; could separate out utilities from rent. Ken Hartlage noted that that is what we've been talking about - knowing the total costs of operating the Peter Fitz and then we would figure out the square footage of the kitchen and how to allocate the operating costs. But we don't have those numbers. We need to figure out the cost/square foot which means Amanda and Craig need to provide us with their costs. Tony Beattie noted he knew of two people who might be interested in managing the commercial kitchen start-up: Sally Smith (ties with the Groton Grange, dedicated to farm life, whiz at chasing grants), and Amy Paradise (lives in Brookline, head cook in Hollis, very entrepreneurial).

The meeting ended with the ongoing topic of how the Agricultural Advisory Board can communicate with the farming community. Sherrill Rosoff will reach out to Diane Cronin about way finding signs that are being funded and whether local farms will be included.

Tony Beattie will call Craig Hanson to talk with him about getting the information we need to complete a commercial kitchen business plan.

Tony Beattie said that Town Counsel is waiting for a short paragraph from our Board providing context for a warrant article requesting farm exemption from the storm water management fee.

Sherrill Rosoff will write a draft of a letter to State legislators in support of various pending bills that support agriculture.

Sherrill Rosoff motioned to adjourn; Ken Hartlage seconded. Motion passed.  
Meeting adjourned at 8:40 PM.

Submitted by Sherrill Rosoff