



Agricultural Advisory Board

Meeting Minutes

4/30/2020

7 - 9 PM

Attending: Tony Beatty, Sherrill Rosoff, Ken Hartlage, Lucy McKain, David Sears
Guest: Craig Hanson, Emily Piper, Joyce Morrow

Meeting came to order at 7 PM.

Lucy McKain motioned to approve the 4/15/2020 minutes. Ken Hartlage seconded; unanimously approved.

Meeting began with a discussion of the Peter Fitz commercial kitchen. It was noted that the Peter Fitz building is closed due to social distancing during the pandemic. Craig Hanson informed the committee that he does have baseline costs for utilities. He has the square footage for classroom spaces but not the kitchen. (Note: we reached out to a member of the Peter Fitz Collaborative who sent us the interior square footage information that was used in the Collaborative's Report to the Board of Selectmen). Other needed expenses: water, sewer, trash... Craig Hanson also indicated that he would have a standard lease agreement available in a few weeks. Ken Hartlage asked about using base rates to estimate use rates to establish a per square foot cost and Craig Hanson also indicated he could get that information. Ken Hartlage then asked about the master liability policy with the town - would clients also carry their own insurance?

Based on Shon Rainsford assessment, all the equipment in the kitchen can be used. Craig Hanson was asked whether the cafeteria could be used as a Farmer's Market and he said yes.

It was agreed that we would meet again with Craig Hanson in a few weeks.

Discussion moved to funding farms in distress. Several ideas were floated: setting up a local farm based fund that could be tapped when needed - could the Grange take this on? Lucy McKain asked what the Grange does - it's a 501(c)3 and a strictly farm based national organization. Ken Hartlage noted that the American Farmland Trust was distributing up to \$1000 to farmers across the country so a non-profit like the Grange could collect money. Emily Piper noted that there is an organization, Sustainable Westford, that runs programs that earn money that go into a fund to be distributed locally. It was decided that we

should talk with an attorney about the idea of creating a Sustainable Pepperell using the Grange. Sherrill Rosoff said she would get in touch with Diane Cronin, of the Historical Commission, to see if that Commission has an interest in collaborating with the Grange and local farms to raise money.

Conversation turned to the Maker Farm. Tony had spoken with Rick McHugh, chair of the Planning Board, who invited the Ag Board to attend the next Planning Board meeting. Tony will write a summary letter stating the Ag Board's position regarding Maker Farm and will circulate around the Board for comments and edits. Emily Piper gave the Board an update on her efforts so far with MDAR and the Farm Bureau. Joyce Morrow believed that there was a confusion of terms between a day camp and a day care. She also suggested connecting with the Pepperell Horse Owners Association, although noted that PHOA is not as active as it once was.

Emily Piper told the Board that she didn't received the conditions for the special permit until one hour before the last Planning Board meeting. Their biggest struggle is with traffic. Tony Beatty noted that if neighbors wish to contest the special permit, they have 20 days from the issuance of the permit to do so.

Some of the conditions are:

1. The maximum number of children who can attend the vacation day camp is 30. The camp can only operate 20 days of any given year, school holidays or vacations.
2. Can operate a summer camp not to exceed 10 weeks in any given year with no more than 70 children including counselors.
3. No more than 8 horses can be boarded at the stable
4. No more than 8 private horseback lessons per day
5. No more than 4 lessons per day up to 4 people in small groups.
6. The above riding lessons can't take place while the vacation or summer day camp is in progress.
7. Operating hours are 7:45 to 3 PM.
8. During peak morning traffic hours no more than 50 vehicle trips (vans, buses, cars) are permitted.
9. During afternoon peak traffic hours no more than 30 vehicle trips are permitted.
10. Only Fridays can be used for family and friends and the public to come to events at the farm during the summer camp period.
11. Traffic counts will be required which will include the attendance and breakdown of cars v. Vans and buses.
12. The Pipers may not construct any new buildings

Some questions regarding the Planning Board's conditions: do State Farm laws supersede local home rule? What about Pepperell as a Right to Farm community? To what extent does the town have the right to place restrictions on activities integral to the operating income of a farm? Are these conditions common sense constraints? Reasonable? Will these conditions allow the Pipers to make a profit or simply keep their nose above water?

Discussion turned to connecting with local and state legislators to discuss farm issues. Sherrill Rosoff will contact Representative Trahan's office. Ken Hartlage noted that the Nashoba Conservation Trust newsletter included food security and linked to the Ag Board town webpage. Sherrill Rosoff will talk with Margaret Scarsdale about a future Ag Board presentation to the Board of Selectmen to raise their awareness of farm issues in town. The idea of a Farm Day was also discussed.

Sherrill Rosoff moved to adjourn. Ken Hartlage seconded. Meeting adjourned at 8:55 PM.

Respectfully,
Sherrill Rosoff