

Town of Brookfield, MA
Agricultural Commission
Minutes of Meeting
September 21st, 2011

Meeting called to order at 7:00 p.m. by Chairman, Clarence Snyder.

Commission members present:

Paul Benjamin, James Dolan, Ron Starcher, and Clarence Snyder

Alternate members present:

Ken Cleveland, Don Grimes, and Steve Novak

Commissioners/Alternates not present: Barbara Haberlin, Don Haberlin , Mark Ledoux

Bylaw Committee representatives present James Cooke, Rudy Heller, Mike Seery, and Barbara Wilson

Others present: Robert R. Barnes

- **Minutes** of the August 17th, 2011 meeting were reviewed. There was a motion and a second to accept the minutes as presented. Motion carried. Clarence will send minutes and the agenda for the next meeting to Mike Seery for posting.
- **Right-to-Farm Bylaw** : The Commission welcomed members of the By-Law Committee. Some history was shared as to the bylaw creating the Commission, the numbers of towns having adopted various versions of a RTF bylaw and the value the Commission sees in having a specific RTF bylaw. Concerns were raised as to conflicts between current Town Zoning bylaws and the proposed RTF bylaw by the Commission. There was agreement to work through both Sections of the proposed RTF bylaw and pertinent Zoning language to better understand conflicts to determine language which could satisfy the interests of both the Commission and the Bylaw Committee.

The following are notes from the paragraph by paragraph review:

1. General note, Section 1 of the RTF Language and the first paragraph of Section 2 appeared to the group as a whole appropriate.

Issue: Any final language will require Town Counsel review before presentation at Town Meeting.

2. The Zoning bylaw does permit the raising of livestock and poultry (Page 18, paragraph B.4). The proposed RTF language would add to the definition of legal farming activities in Section 2 Paragraph 2 and would seem to strengthen the definition of allowable activities.

Issue: Numbers of farming activities listed in the RTF language require special permits within the Zoning language. It was agreed that a list of these special permit requirements be made and consensus reached between the bodies as to special permit needs.

Special Permit Reference List:

Zoning Page 13 Paragraph 1 .

Sub reference a. 1 "Agriculture ... under 5 acres"

d. Commercial greenhouse

e. Commercial harvesting of forest products

f. Commercial raising of animals

3, RTF Section 2 refers to the "slaughter" of animals. There was a preference raised not to permit "slaughter". The Commissioners described requirements and practices currently in place.

Issue: Should a requirement of a special permit be added to the Zoning bylaw to enable the Town to determine its interest in "slaughtering" activities?

4. RTF Section 3 refers to "accepted agricultural practices" in regulating issues of "noise...odor". Zoning bylaw page 10, paragraph B.5. and page 11 paragraph C.1. both relate to "noise...oder" using the word "excessive" to define what would be allowed or not.

Issue: Is there a better way to define what is "excessive"? Or, in the case of legal farming activities the remedy in RTF Section 5 Disputes sufficient to regulate those activities? Or, are there specific farming related activities that would be seen as requiring a special permit where through Zoning, Planning or other reviews acceptable norms could be established?

It was determined that the discussion of the RTF Bylaw should be deferred to the regularly scheduled Commission meeting of October 19th. This precludes the ability to bring a RTF warrant article to the Special Fall Town Meeting. It was the consensus of the group present that it would be better to strive for concurrence of RTF language before presenting any article at Town meeting. Note: It was generally felt that any presentation and passage of RTF language will require modifications to current Town bylaws.

- **Farmers Market:** The market will continue through September.

- **Apple Country Fair:** Most will be exhibiting on the Common, The Congregational Church has given permission to hold pony rides, as long the provider lists the church on her insurance. It is the current plan to have an Ag table for the pony rides and to pass out the Ag brochure. Phil Peirce was contacted to confirm the Commissions plans. A sign up sheet will be passed around for those who can support the booth.
- **Grant Application:** Worcester Foundation notified the Commission that we were not successful. We did receive a \$50 donation. The Cultural Council is considering a \$350 donation which could provide for a printing of the next revision of the brochure. A new revision is in the works adding the Gustafson farm. The Commission will look to schedule a joint meeting with the Cultural Council to look to a joint brochure for next Summer's activities on the Common.
- **OSV:** Town Farm Gardens will be supporting the OSV Harvest Day activities.

With no other business, the next meeting was scheduled for October 19th, 2011 at 7:00 p.m. It was motioned and seconded to adjourn the meeting at 8:20 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Clarence Snyder