

Brooklyn Agricultural Commission
Tuesday, February 28, 2017
7:00 PM
Town Hall

MINUTES

I. Call To Order – Chairperson, Lou Brodeur called the meeting to order at 7:01 p.m.

II. Roll Call (5 Regular and 3 Alternates)

Members Present:

Lou Brodeur, Chairperson; Charles Langevin, Vice Chairperson; Sandra Brodeur; Joyce Meader.

Stanley Karro arrived at 7:32 p.m.

Deborah Tanner was absent with notification.

Sally Timmons, Alternate, was absent with notification.

Also Present:

Anne Ennis
Aaron Kerouac

III. Seat alternates if necessary – L. Brodeur stated that J. Meader would sit in as a voting Member in the Absence of Deborah Tanner.

IV. Review minutes from January 26, 2016 Meeting

Motion was made by C. Langevin to approve the Minutes of the Regular Meeting of January 23, 2017, as presented. Second by S. Brodeur. Motion carried (3-0-0). J. Meader abstained as she had not been present at that meeting.

Motion was made by C. Langevin to approve the Minutes of the Regular Meeting of November 22, 2016. Second by J. Meader. Motion carried (3-0-0). S. Brodeur had left the room.

V. Public Participation – None.

VI. Old Business:

A. Committee report for: “History of Agriculture in Brooklyn.”

L. Brodeur stated that S. Karro will be arriving late and that he had told him that there was nothing new to report.

S. Brodeur returned to the room.

B. Food Safety Seminar to be held in Willimantic? Updates?

S. Brodeur reported:

- Debbie still does not have a date, but is thinking sometime in March.
- Debbie wants to send invitations to all local farmers, Ag Commissions, etc.

S. Brodeur feels there isn't enough planning time to hold the event in March. A. Ennis agreed. There was agreement among the Commission that late summer/fall may be better time with harvesting/canning activities at that time. She explained that the purpose of the seminar is to familiarize people with CLICK. There was discussion regarding CLICK.

J. Meader suggested changing the title so that it would more appropriately reflect the benefits/value added of certified kitchens. There was discussion.

C. Snap machine purchase for Brooklyn Farmer Market?

No discussion. See below (under Item VI. D. for motion).

D. Discussion on letter submitted to First Selectman's Office regarding status of Members. Still waiting to get on Selectmen's meeting agenda.

Motion was made by S. Brodeur to endorse the slate of Officers elected at the meeting of January 23, 2017: Lou Brodeur – Chairperson; Charles Langevin – Vice Chairperson. Second by J. Meader.

Discussion ensued regarding whether the Commission should elect a secretary and what work is required of the recording secretary (e.g. posting agendas, minutes, meeting schedules to the website). L. Brodeur asked if the motion should be amended to include electing a secretary. There was agreement among the Commission that L. Brodeur will speak with R. Ives to get clarification.

Motion carried (4-0-0).

Motion was made by S. Brodeur to accept the schedule of meeting dates for 2017, as presented. Second by C. Langevin.

Discussion: L. Brodeur explained that the date for December 2017 had been changed because sometimes the December meeting gets cancelled.

Motion carried (4-0-0).

Motion was made by J. Meader to pay the fee for the SNAP machine for the Farmers' Market. Second by S. Brodeur.

Discussion ensued regarding Frank Anastasio who is the person who usually takes care of this.

Motion carried (4-0-0).

There was discussion regarding the status of A. Ennis. She needs to fill out and submit the application form to become a Member of the Ag Commission.

E. Update on solar project in South Brooklyn?

J. Meader provided copies of a letter (for consideration of the Commission) that she composed proposing that tax money, from the solar panels currently on good agricultural land (Rukstella Road) being used by a farmer, go into the Open Space Fund to protect agricultural land. She had gotten approval from Rick Ives to write the letter to the Selectmen.

S. Karro arrived at 7:32 p.m.

Discussion included:

- Aaron Kerouac stated that it will be \$350,000.00 per year for 20 years (not approved yet by the Town). Farmland tax would still be collected, but there is a question as to whether it will be eligible for 490. Mr. Kerouac stated that there was a bill proposed by the Eastern Connecticut Conservation District Representative (David) that 100 percent of the taxes from both Towns go to a separate designated State open space fund. Mr. Kerouac feels that the P&Z Commission would not agree with that.
- There was a question regarding the value of what will be constructed in Brooklyn.
- J. Meader spoke with a farmer who is interested in selling development rights.
- There was a question as to who the current property owner of the site is. Mr. Kerouac stated that, at the Canterbury meeting that he attended, it was confirmed that there will be four owners and one of the owners will be owner/operator and will oversee his own property.
- The Commission agreed that the letter should be sent to the Selectmen and the Board of Finance. Mr. Kerouac explained that he had already submitted a proposal to the Selectmen and the Board of Finance and that he had suggested an enterprise fund (a high interest fund like Wheelabrator did) as it is more solid than bonding (50 percent into a high interest enterprise fund and the other 50 percent back into the reserve fund until the reserve fund gets back at 2012 levels). He stated that it is a fund that could be borrowed against instead of using it down to \$0. He stated that the reserve fund has been pillaged by \$2 million in the past three years (which he had warned about) and having the enterprise fund would protect the Town against this because you cannot touch the principle. He stated that after the \$2 million gets paid back, 100 percent would then go into the enterprise fund. He stated that the Town may need to take from the reserve again to balance this current budget and possibly the next.

J. Meader expressed concern for the term "enterprise" not meaning open space. Mr. Kerouac stated that maybe it should be called an "investment fund" or "high yield" fund that he feels that he and the Ag Commission seem to have the same goal. C. Langevin stated that he feels J. Meader's letter is right on target. Mr. Kerouac agreed.

Motion was made by S. Karro to forward to the Selectmen and the Board of Finance the letter that J. Meader wrote proposing that tax money from the solar panels on agricultural land go into the Open Space Fund. Second by S. Brodeur. Motion carried (5-0-0).

L. Brodeur stated that he will have the letter re-typed and he will sign it. S. Brodeur stated that she likes the way the letter is worded.

S. Brodeur spoke about the Harvest New England Ag Market and Conference and Trade Show which is in Sturbridge again this year. Although the deadline has passed for this year, she stated that scholarship money is available earlier in the year. She suggested looking on the website.

S. Brodeur provided copies of a list of possible links for the Ag Commission's website page and asked that the Commission Members take a look at them at home.

S. Brodeur stated that she had made a copy of the POCD that involves the Ag Commission (pages 18 & 19): objectives/key priorities/recommendations. She stated that a review/refresher may help the Commission to think of new ideas for things the Commission could/should be doing.

VII. New Business:

A. Brooklyn Town Picnic – Memorial Day – Any plans for this year's event?

S. Brodeur will check with Diane Wimmer, Chairperson of the Conservation Commission, who may want to do something with the Ag Commission regarding information on starting plants.

B. Any other business to come before this meeting.

No discussion.

C. Start thinking about "Walktober" and if we have at least one to support.

A. Ennis offered to coordinate an event to show her farm on a Sunday from 12 p.m. to 2 p.m. (not October 8th).

- There will be calves to see; silage piles; walk through the cow barn; tractors, chopper, feed wagon for viewing; walk in the corn fields.
- She will see if she can get cheese from Cabot, maybe some coloring books, disposable boots.
- Maybe a local vet can get involved.
- No need to warn against touching the animals if they save the Cabot cheese until the end.
- J. Meader will work with A. Ennis on a walking trail.
- Someone could read a history of the farm. S. Karro will help coordinate and try to get Charlie to read it.
- The Commission will see if they can permission to close down Ennis Road for the event. Maybe get fire trucks to block traffic.

S. Karro reported:

- Finnish Hall is celebrating the 100th year of Finland's independence, the 30th anniversary of the Heritage Society, and the 25th anniversary of Fin Fun Weekend. There will be a Regional celebration in Leominster and there will be a concert in Canterbury Hall at the end of April. The Finnish Hall (together with the Canterbury Library) is promoting a free movie night. On March 11th there will be Culinary Delights (a celebration of Easter foods) also free. On March 15th, at 6 p.m., there will be appetizers served at the Canterbury Library (also free). He provided flyers for viewing.

A. Ennis reported that some local dairy farmers (that are not in a co-op) are being de-pooled and will not be getting Class 1 milk pricing anymore. There is too much milk. There is some protection being in a co-op. She will attend a meeting on March 1st and will find out more information. J. Meader explained that there is a huge surplus. Some of the big farms are expanding. China and Europe are not buying our milk anymore because they have higher standards (no GMO's).

S. Karro asked how J. Meader's letter will get out to the public. S. Brodeur suggested asking Frannie if she would like to do a story on the other side of solar farms. J. Meader offered to write a letter to the editor pointing out that the voters have decided that they want to protect open space (POCD) and that solar panels are a conflicting interest. S. Brodeur stated that you are limited to very few words in a letter to the editor. L. Brodeur will send out a press release. Aaron Kerouac suggested that it also be forwarded (on letterhead as official correspondence) to the P&Z Commission and the Conservation Commission.

VIII. Action Items for Next Meeting

No discussion.

IX. Adjourn (Next meeting March 22, 2016).

Motion was made by C. Langevin to adjourn at 8:16 p.m. Second by J. Meader. Motion carried (5-0-0).

Respectfully submitted,

J.S. Perreault
Acting Recording Secretary