

Shelburne Agricultural Commission — Meeting Minutes — January 29, 2007

Present: Carolyn Wheeler (chair), Norm Davenport, Barbara Parry, Tim Smith, Karen Gould

Guest: John Payne

Carolyn Wheeler called the meeting to order at 7:12.

Minutes: Tim Smith moved to accept the minutes, Norm Davenport second the motion and the Minutes were approved.

Approval of the prior meeting's minutes led to a discussion of the need for having alternates for the Agricultural Commission. This may require a request for a bylaw change which would then become an article on the warrant for Town Meeting. The commission would need to submit a request to the select board in March.

New Business:

Carolyn Wheeler presented drafts of letters to Stan Rosenberg and Dennis Guyer voicing opposition to the NAIS program and requesting that the state of Massachusetts decline participation in the program. The Commission unanimously agreed to sign the letters and did so.

The Commission discussed the details for a public informational meeting to inform livestock owners of the impact of the NAIS Animal program. The meeting, which would be hosted by the Ag Commission, would introduce the public to the commission. The dates of February 19, 26, March 5 or March 12 were suggested for the meeting. Carolyn Wheeler will check availability of Shelburne Fire Department or Grange Hall (with the suggestion that perhaps the Grange would be willing to co-host). 7 pm was the suggested time. Carolyn also agreed to contact Ben Grosscup from the Northeast Organic Farming Association to present the history of the development of the NAIS and its potential impact. Ben has given similar presentations throughout the state. Karen Gould offered to create an announcement/advertisement for the meeting. John Payne suggested contacting both the West County News and the Shelburne Falls Independent to promote the meeting and encourage turn out. Carolyn will notify the Commission and post the meeting once a location and speaker have been secured.

Using the street list, the Commission created a contact list of livestock and poultry owners to contact personally regarding the meeting.

Creation of a Marketing Pamphlet for Shelburne Farmers – The Commission discussed the possibility of investigating funding through Highlands Community Initiative or CISA to create a brochure highlighting farm products produced in Shelburne to encourage town support for local agriculture. It was agreed to pursue this discussion at a future meeting after the NAIS public information forum.

Further discussion:

Carolyn Wheeler shared a news clipping from June 9, 1987, stating a supreme court ruling of Judge Rehnquist, under the 5th amendment, property owners compensation for zoning changes that reduce value of land.

John Payne shared copies of the latest revisions to chapters 61, 61A signed into law by Gov. Romney in December, 2006. Carolyn Wheeler raised the question regarding chapter 61 status and whether it can roll from one year into the next, so farmers won't fail to file unintentionally. It was noted the policies regarding chapters 61 and 61a are statewide policy. The question was raised whether Agricultural Commissions could potentially lobby for change here to assist farmers. Another possibility is lobbying for a split in tax rate so farm buildings are taxed at a lower rate. Homework could be done to see if there are working models in other communities. Further discussion on this topic was tabled for a later date.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:07 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Barbara Parry