

**Town of Medway
Agricultural Commission
Holliston Town Hall, Room 105
703 Washington Street, Holliston, MA 01746**

MINUTES OF MEETING

May 16, 2018

Agricultural Commission members from the towns of Medway, Holliston, Franklin and Sherborn met to discuss agricultural endeavors and challenges being faced by each town and hope to cooperate on initiatives beneficial to all.

Present:

Medway: Chairman Paul Atwood, Secretary Margaret Perkins, and Board Member Bruce Hamblin.

Holliston: Chairman PJ Kilkelly, Board members Carrie Marsh, Jocelyn Tremblay, and Grace Kilkelly

Franklin: Chair Carly Fisher, Vice-Chair Jeffrey Perry, and Clerk Marian Szymanski

Sherborn: Chairman Jon Dowse.

Call to Order:

Chairman Kilkelly called the meeting to order at 7:10 PM.

Town Summaries:

Franklin-

The Agricultural Commission was formed two months ago and has already been extremely busy dealing with topics such as a farmer with a conservation issue and chicken by-laws. Franklin agriculture consists mostly of small farms and a farmer-run Farmer's Market that runs from June to October.

Medway-

Formed about 2 years ago. A recent initiative was an attempt to reach out to local Chapter 61 land owners and take inventory of farming practices in town. Approximately half of the land from about 12 years ago is no longer Chapter 61 (some taken by the town, or high school). The Board is currently in the process of trying to get right-to-farm by-law. Thus far, one of the Selectmen was supportive and the next step will be to present to the entire Board of Selectmen. Chairman Kilkelly suggested getting town residents involved in the process. Medway also has an active community farm as well as a Farmer's Market.

Sherborn-

The Commission has been in existence for about 5 years, and things have been pretty quiet for the last couple of years.

Holliston-

Formed in 2005. The Board is currently working on the community farm and community gardens, recently put in a butterfly aviary, and have had lots of support from local groups that have given the Board grant money. The Holliston Agricultural Commission also runs a very successful Farmer's Day in September, and is working with the Wellness Council and school boards to get farming back into the classroom. A survey conducted a few weeks ago showed that farm to school was a very well supported project by the community.

Roundtable discussion:

-Franklin has a lot of existing by-laws that don't seem farmer-friendly. Education of town officials on farming issues also seems to be lacking. Chairman Kilkelly agreed that some laws are fuzzy and leave too much room for interpretation. Chairman Dowse noted that a good working relationship with other town boards is crucial.

-Ms. Perkins noted that poultry by-laws in Medway have been updated recently and although they are better, they are still confusing and asked what other towns are facing in regard to chickens. Board members from Franklin stated that 90% of properties in Franklin do not conform to by-laws and the town deals with it as "don't ask, don't tell". In Holliston the chicken laws are also very vague. Sherborn hasn't had a lot of discussions on chickens, but with the town's 2-3 acre zoning by-law, there is a lot of open space making it less of an issue.

-Chairman Kilkelly noted that in his experience, education on farming is key. It is important to have information readily available for residents (town or Board website).

-Board of Health officials seem reasonable in Franklin. Medway has had some issues with Health Department regulations for Farmer's Market which have made it difficult for some small farms to participate.

- Most Boards see the value in a newsletter for residents, but none have done it yet. Most have a Facebook page.

-Chairman Kilkelly asked if anyone had ideas for multi-town endeavors. Someone suggested a campaign to get information out to the public about what agricultural products are available to buy locally. Town business councils may be able to assist with outreach and local farmers can advertise on town websites. A representative from each group will reach out with information about local farms and available products.

-Other suggestions for Town Agricultural Commissions were to have a presence at all town events (animals are a huge draw) and get students from Norfolk County Agricultural High School involved.

Upcoming events:

July 9, 2018: Animal Health Boot Camp, 6-8 PM; open to the public.

Present members agreed to meet again as a group sometime this summer.

Adjournment:

The meeting adjourned at 8:38 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Filipa LeClair

Meeting Recording Secretary