



Ag Committee Meeting
Virtual Meeting Via Zoom
Thursday, January 12, 2023
7:00 PM

Attendees

Melissa Maxwell, co-chair, Barrett's Mill Farm
Liza Bemis, co-chair, Hutchins Farm
Dan Schmid, member, The Walden Woods Project Farm
Steve Verrill, member, Verrill Farm
Grace Scimone, associate member, Scimone Farm
Rosanne Scimone, Scimone Farm
Sam Corcoran, University of Massachusetts
Joe Rogers, clerk, associate member
Brian Cramer, Hutchins Farm
Mark Congdon, Salt Box Farm
Emily Wheeler, visitor
Lois Suarez, pollinator committee
Polly Vanasse, Gaining Ground Board

Meeting opened 7:03 PM by Liza

1. Review Minutes: Minutes from Dec. 8th meeting motion to approve by Steve, seconded by Melissa. Minutes approved.
2. News about Concord Farms and Farmers: Article in Concord Bridge was well done. We should work with them in the future. The Manchester farming conference was informative and enjoyed by all Concord Farmers who attended. Steve and Dan discussed drip irrigation and blossom end rot in tomatoes where calcium is not being taken up by the plants. Mark is considering crops with longer storage life. He talked about his troubles with no-till that pulling up early carrots triggers activation of latent weed seeds. Steve and Brian discussed the Williams Tine Weeder and the Lely weeder. Both effective in dry soil.
3. Spring Forum Discussion: Spring forum speaker Sam Corcoran asked what we wanted to include in the forum discussion. The title to the event still needs to be clarified as does the desired balanced approach to "Till, Low Till and No till". Polly would like forum to promote the principal that healthy soils bring healthy vegetables. Steve observed that "no till" was briefly popular 40 years ago and then ignored. Brian observed that no till was a slower process more difficult for a farm that needs a quick turnaround of crops for market. Emily asked that the discussion be broadened to include climate change. "How to feed ourselves and protect the land". Sam agreed that agriculture can both help and hinder climate change. Should the forum have a question-and-answer period? Consensus yes. Forms for the public to write in questions in advance might be made available online. The forum will need a poster. Melissa said she would ask Lise to help because she does it so well. We will need a projector and screen? Harvey Wheeler might have that, Dan offered his friend again to bring one if we need it.

Forum date top choice March 29th. 2nd choice April 29. At Harvey Wheeler. Food? Steve thought Verrill Farm could supply light snacks. Should we have tables available if farms want to do a display?

The forum panel likely might be Steve, Mark, Brian, Ana (from Gaining Ground). We will have to ask Ana if she is interested.

What to call the forum? Possibilities discussed include. To till or not to till. Tillage, what is it? Let's talk about tillage. Benefits and challenges of "till", "low till" and "no till" and what it has to do with growing vegetables. More suggestions and discussions are needed. Consensus was everyone think about it, Melissa and Liza will put a few suggestions together for next meeting and we can vote on them.

4. Town paper bag charge update letter updated and review: Edited to make the letter from Liza and Melissa on behalf of the Concord Agriculture Committee. Consensus was to send it to the board of health and to the health department. Dan motioned to approve the letter and send it. Grace seconded the motion. The committee voted and it was a unanimous yes.
5. Town annual report review: The Ag Committee's annual report letter approved as written. Changed a spelling error and a grammar error in the last paragraph. Liza moved that the report be sent as amended. Dan seconded the motion.
6. Farm tours – Colonial Garden?: Happy has talked to Colonial Gardens about a potential tour there in the early spring? She wasn't present so moved this agenda item to next month.
7. Farm video update. Nothing right now, Liza will talk to Tory about the possibility of continuing this.
8. Quick Ag Day logistics update: Liza: Bookstore being approached for window space, waiting to hear. West Concord Green Thumbs asked about coming this year, but are interested in selling bulbs? Ag Committee has usually had rule that no one sell anything at Ag Day that is not grown by the farmer, do we want to continue this rule? Usually, the nonprofits just do free or give away things. Consensus is we want to keep the focus on the farms in Concord, so we probably want to keep this rule. We should make the rules very clear when we reach out to the nonprofits and other participants about 2023 Ag Day. Liza brought up we probably should be clearer about what non-profits are given priority to attend Ag Day as interested has grown so much. This past year we gave space priority to ag, food, environmental, and small businesses nonprofits, as well as nonprofits who had attended Ag Day before. We probably should be very clear about this to potential nonprofit attendees this year. Dan liked Steve's point that we should move the farmers to the middle of the space, and move the non-profits to the outside of space, Steve doesn't want the non-farmers to dominate the event. Liza reports the 250-anniversary committee is interested in piggy backing off Ag Day. Consensus that something following Ag Day would be welcomed, but if it was during it would be competing. The 250-committee is looking into doing more committee dinner around town in general. They might be reaching out to Verrill Farm to host a dinner there. Grace brought up the farmers monument – how can we highlight that or do an event there in relation to the 250th? We should keep thinking about how to participate in the 250th celebration.
9. Other business: None

10. Public comment: Emily and Joe are doing that online course on history of the farmland of concord. Saltbox, Barrett's Mill, and Verrill are all speaking in the class. Lois Suarez invited discussion of Tillage and Cultivation and what those terms mean to the general public vs what those words mean to farmers.
11. Next Meeting: February 9th. Dan moves to adjourn, Steven seconded. Meeting ended 8:34 PM