

Agriculture Committee meeting Thursday, February 11th via Zoom

Phil Lupiewicz, Minute Man Media Network  
Joe Rogers, Associate Member  
Dan Schmid, Member  
Lise Holdorf, Chair  
Emily Wheeler, visitor  
Happy Goethert, Member  
Terri Ackerman, Select Board  
Brian Cramer, Hutchins Farm  
Liza Bemis, Member  
Melissa Maxwell, Clerk

**Called to order 7:06**

**Approve previous minutes:** Steve approves, Happy seconds

**Committee Membership:** Joe Rogers is now an associate member. The committee has room for one more associate member for a total of 3.

**Spring Forum:**

Lise has heard from many farms about their demonstration plans for the spring forum event. Phil Lupiewicz of Minuteman Media shared that he would be happy to have his staff film 2-3 minutes to a half hour of footage at each farm in late April, early May as discussed.

Dan said for his seeding might be interesting if there's a span of time in-between to see things come up. To make having clips of different time periods, Phil shared that farmers could record some footage on their own cell phones (or he could loan equipment if needed) then email it to Minute Man Media.

Lise reviewed that so far farms interested include Dan Schmid of Walden Woods (putting in raised beds), Hutchins Farm (carousal planter), Barrett's Mill (field prep and seeding), Steve Verrill, Saltbox (bee installation), Scimone (pea planting), and maybe Ricky Marshall for a total of seven farms. Melissa mentioned that the goal is to educate, and promote farms in general for the season, not necessarily to lead up to tour days, as there will be limited spots available for on-site participation.

Phil shared that Minute Man Media is working with the National Park to fill lots of activities that used to take place over the long weekend. He will attend a meeting soon for planning and might be able to use some of the same ideas for the Ag Committee project. Steve shared that the Minute Man statue is behind a plow. Many were farmers who left to fight and we are the farmers who are left.

Happy suggested focusing farm tours on a certain weekend with a lot happening to generate enthusiasm and participation. Lise reviewed that the committee had previously discussed doing 2 or 3 demos a week but not all will want to open to the public, so the concentrated event would be when the filmed piece was ready. Phil shared that he wasn't sure how long it would take to put together the whole piece but each farm could choose a day that works for them in the last week in April – first two weeks in May if that's what the committee would like.

Happy thought we should concentrate one week when there are videos during the week and weekend of on-farm events to get it started, then have farm tours continue later. Brian mentioned that the spring event has always been a singular presentation, not a lot going on at farms that customers can buy so it doesn't have to be an event over a longer time. Brian thought it would be nice to have some kind of venue where people can watch the presentation in one sitting on a certain date. He suggested there could be an intro with all the farms that's very brief and with short interviews then over the course of the video there could be clips of the demos at each farm.

Joe recommends that the result of the work of Minute Man Media be accessible to the public in pieces of about 10 minutes for each farm. He would like it available for the public to select which segment they would like to watch from a library online with a list of what is available. He would like there to be public access to it in the future as a way for people to become familiar with each farm.

Emily mentioned that this spring forum plan almost seems like an update of What's Growing in Concord, which was planned to be the centerpiece of the forum planned for last year before being cancelled due to Covid-19. The new video would give people an idea of what Concord farming looks like today, it would serve to remind them about farming in Concord and introduce them to each farm so that they will visit during upcoming season.

Brian suggested we have stand-alone intro piece then each farm could have their own segment. Emily had in mind single production but will need someone to write script or maybe a handful of questions each farm addresses, perhaps for 5 minutes. She thinks all filming should be done by MMN for consistency.

Phil suggested the Committee create a form for everyone who participates and ask them to provide information for filming including who is participating, what they will demonstrate, and what date they would like Minute Man Media come to their farm and for how long. That way Minute Man Media can create a schedule that works for their team. He shared that options for viewing include the Public Access at a certain time or on youtube for viewing anytime. The committee will need to hone in on how many farms and how long the finished product will be. Phil shared that having a host can work well to tie the piece together and carry it along.

Steve shared that no town nearby has maintained the agricultural presence that Concord has.

Phil needs to talk with his team to get scheduling sense. Late May is okay with Lise, Liza, and Steve but Happy is interested in earlier. Phil will leave it to the committee to coordinate with the farms and report back to him about film timing for each farm. Once we know how many farms we can determine length. If it is too long it could be two shows. Ideally each farm would focus on something that can be filmed in one day.

List of confirmed participants includes Walden Woods, Verrill, Barrett's Mill, Hutchins, Scimone, and Saltbox. Lise will follow up with Chip about Chris at Brigham greenhouse and will send Phil the Kenney Farm video. Steve will ask Ricky Marshall and Colonial Gardens. Lise mentioned it might be easier to film without public there, then farms could have an event closer to the day it's aired. First the committee will focus on filming plans and schedule and then we will schedule tours.

### **News about Concord Farms and farmers**

The farms are all under snow! Brian shared that is good insulation for this cold weather. Steve Verrill is having housing problems. This year workers can't live in Steve's house because it is too close to horses so he is leasing condos in Maynard for them.

### **Town Meeting: Article 49 (Neonicotinoids Prohibition on Town Agricultural Land)**

The town article about neonicotinoids is coming up this year and Lise mentioned that the Chair of the Select Board asked if the Ag Committee is taking a position. Steve thinks it should be a pesticide board rather than a Town Meeting issue. He shared that homeowner use for one hemlock tree is the same max amount allowed in one acre of soil. Steve mentioned that the pesticide board might make it a restricted pesticide so that homeowners won't use it without the proper training which would be an improvement. Steve said that many studies are based on when the neonicotinoids used to be a powder so the excess would blow out of a vacuum seeder but now it's made as a thin covering on the seed that doesn't come off on your hands or in seeder. Brian suggested the Committee take no position at all. Lise brought up that the Ag Committee could make a statement without taking a position. We could address the issue that replacement pesticide options are worse for bees. Emily shared that she felt it would be worth not taking a position but still writing a statement, Liza agrees as do Steve and Lise and Melissa. On Feb 27<sup>th</sup> there's a preview town meeting where the committee could have a representative who reports that the Ag Committee is still in discussion or that we are not taking a position, Brian agreed to attend. The committee will wait to write a statement until after the pesticide board recommendations. Steve and Brian will draft a statement and send to everyone who will read and be ready for comments at the next meeting. Terri mentioned that the deadline for a statement is probably end of March but hard to say because of Covid-19. Last year there was a preview meeting then a separate meeting for voting.

### **Other Business**

Lise shared that comments are being accepted until February 19th on the redevelopment plan for the NMI/Starmet site, and affordable housing (which is an issue in which the Ag Committee has taken an interest), is in the mix in some of the proposals. Lise shared that those who are interested should read the report and submit comments individually. Emily mentioned that the Ag Committee is always interested in issues of affordable housing and it would not hurt to say we are always in favor of more housing options in town, trusting that remediation would genuinely be to housing standards. Liza shared that she was also interested in the mention of the use for recreational needs as this could help the town meet needs for recreation without the loss of farmland for that purpose. **Lise will send a link for report comments to everyone in case they would to contribute.**

Lise will continue monitoring the Covid-19 vaccination status in MA and keep everyone updated about when and how agriculture workers can be vaccinated.

**Public Comment**

None

**Next meeting**

Thursday March 11th, 2021