

Concord Agriculture Committee
Thursday, July 12th, 2018 7:00 pm
Assessor's Office, 24 Court Lane

Present:

Brian Cramer, member
Happy Goethert, chair
Lise Holdorf, member
Emily Wheeler, member
Steve Verrill, member

Meeting called to order at 7:07

News about farming

Brian shared that a new company was awarded the contract to process EBT cards for farms and farmers' markets in the fall of 2017. The transition has not been going smoothly, so many farms, especially at farmers markets won't be able to take EBT cards temporarily

Emily saw an episode of Chronicle last night that focused on agriculture in Massachusetts. She thought she caught glimpses of some Concord landmarks. One statistic cited is that Massachusetts is 3rd in the country for direct farm sales.

Steve is on a bookmark from the library featuring Concord readers.

Happy shared a question from Grace Scimone. She was wondering if other farmers are noticing an increase in the frog population. She also asked if other farmers in town grow celery. Brian does and says you need to keep it watered and fed.

Farm, Food and Garden report

Jo-Ann has been doing most of the fundraising communications. Plans are going forward with a food truck, but Saltbox cannot commit to preparing food for the truck, so that is a bit up in the air. There was some discussion that because there has been some attrition over the years (Macone, Crooked Row, First Root, Bill Kenney) that future markets might include Carlisle farms (or other regional farms) in order to keep the offerings more interesting.

Stone Soup may be shifting as well. It may in future years become an hors d'oeuvres event rather than a dinner, as it is becoming difficult for the committee to coordinate.

Happy suggested that the committee contact Brooke Redmond to find out what areas they need help with from the Ag Committee, especially with publicity. She has attempted several times to contact the Concord Journal about resuming the View from the Fields column, publicity for Ag Day, and publishing an article about green cards. She has only received an automatic response.

Brian felt that there isn't one central person coordinating the weekend, so it's difficult to know where different planning aspects stand, and with his farming obligations, he cannot take on that coordinating role. Emily suggested that Jo-Ann could be the next Ag Committee liaison to the Food, Farm and Garden Fair committee.

Emily would like to try to get Silberleaf back to the market, and help figure out a way for Brigham to be able to attend without Karl and Elena.

Steve suggested a stamp book to encourage people to visit the farm stands around town. It could be given out at Ag Day market and people could get it stamped at the farm stands, and submit their completed passbook at Stone Soup for a raffle. Lise offered to put together a passport book.

Joan Daniels is the contact person for the food truck. Brian suggested that 80 Thoreau or Woods Hill Table might want to prepare food for the food truck. Brian is the liaison for the food specials for the weekend.

Other options for publicity - Facebook, Instagram, local groups that have a large mailing list and send out weekly communications about events, other local magazines like North Bridge or Edible Boston.

Amy Noordzij is coordinating kids activities. The Jazz Festival had corn hole and blocks for kids activities, which were popular and could work at the market. Lise volunteered to try to borrow a corn hole set from family.

Pollinator Health Committee

The committee held a conference call with Jay Feldman, former member of National Organic Standards Board. He has seen other municipalities trying to protect pollinators through education and limiting the Town departments' use of pesticides. He has also seen some success with convincing large box stores to stop carrying neonicotinoids. He was mostly focused on limiting landscapers' and towns' usage rather than farmers'.

The committee will also be looking into tick control companies. Ag Committee members were skeptical that pesticides used on ticks would impact pollinators.

The other major topic of discussion was the House Bill requiring neonicotinoids to be treated as a restricted use pesticide in Massachusetts. The bill may require you to notify all abutters if you use neonicotinoids. Steve wondered if that includes treated seed. Brian thought that the notification requirements only applied to landscapers, but Steve thought it might include farmers too. The bill has been in Ways and Means since last November, so it may not pass this year. The Worcester County Beekeepers wrote a letter in support of the bill. The Massachusetts Medical Society came out in support of research on neonicotinoids.

The next pollinator committee meeting is Tuesday July 17th.

Other business

Happy contacted the 3 people who had submitted green cards for the Ag Committee. Two already have commitments with the Town. She hasn't heard from the third person. Happy would like to get someone from Gaining Ground on the committee.

Emily will update the event form and Happy will submit it to the police department for the Ag Day event. She said Happy needs to send permit request to Kate Hodges and call Andrew Mara.

Next meeting date

August 9th, 2018 at 7pm in Assessors.

Meeting adjourned at 8:45

Minutes approved _H. Goethert 8/13/18_____