

**TOWN OF BARNSTABLE
AGRICULTURAL COMMITTEE BOARD**

2160 Meeting House Way
West Barnstable, MA

**Agricultural Committee Board Meeting
January 23, 2008**

A regularly scheduled meeting of the Barnstable Agricultural Committee Board was held on Wednesday, January 23, 2008 at the West Barnstable Fire Station, 2160 Meeting House Way, W. Barnstable, MA. The meeting was called to order at 7 pm by Chairman Bill Plettner.

Roll Call:

- Board members present: Tim Friary, Mary Knoble, Max Kunin, Bill Plettner, David Ross, Hilary Sandler, Leslie Spencer.
- Council Liason, Hank Farnum
- Public: Susan Fernald

Act on Minutes:

- On a motion by Hilary Sandler and seconded by David Ross, the December Minutes were approved as printed.

Old Business:

- Bill discussed the need to create a work plan which evolved into a discussion about the Farm Bureau
 - Cape & Islands Farm Bureau Meetings are held the third Tuesday of every month at the Stop& Shop in Hyannis at 7:30 pm. The Farm Bureau serves as a clearinghouse for all Ag Comms. Irene Winkler notified Bill of a joint meeting of all Cape Ag Comms on Saturday, Feb. 23, 2008 from 9 am – 4 pm. Hilary plans to attend.
 - SEMAP – there are four groups throughout the Commonwealth promoting agriculture and SEMAP is one of them. Tim described the *Buy Fresh Buy Local* that is seeking funding through Mass License plates to develop marketing and promotional materials for farmers, hook fishermen and shellfishermen (cranberry growers?) Bill Clark from the Probate Office is spear-heading the grant submission process.
 - Hank suggested to Bill to create a reasonable inventory of farms, land and town-owned parcels and putting together an RFP for the use of it.
- Finding ways to relate to the town; being more pro-active with other Town Ag Comms. Bill presented a sample Right-to-Farm by-law. See Appendix J on the www.massagcom.org website. The towns of Brewster, Harwich and Falmouth may already have it. Hilary asked what is going on town to town to encourage more sustainable farming.
- Discussion followed about map of Chapter 61 lands and cataloging parcels of land that could be leased to the town. Bill and Hank will meet on that. Will it capture shellfish grants? Max expressed doubt that it would.

- Finding ways to capitalize on the economics of farming was determined to be an ongoing education process.

Hank wrote the Administrative code on what constitutes a farm; State law mandates tax on everything over 5 acres.

- *WorkPlan*: Cataloguing farms and farmers in Barnstable
Bill asked how can we locate people who are farming:
Farm Bureau – may be less accurate; Town Census – unsure of accuracy;
NRCS (National Resource Cons. Service) or FSA (Farm Service Administration)

Dave will check on RCS at the Conservation district office in Wareham and Bill will contact the Farm Bureau

The criteria for making a determination is based on realizing \$5,000 in annual revenue or you are considered a hobbyist and not exempt.

A “working landscape” or are you doing it for a profit?

Mass Dept. of Agriculture has maps of most farms.

Guest, Susan, suggested using *Edible Cape Cod*, local papers, checking with Cynthia Cole at the Business Improvement district.

A Public Service Announcement on Channel 18 requesting information on farmers of :

Cranberries, market gardens, bees, wine grapes, small fruits, livestock, nurseries/greenhouses, aquaculture, county farm – fruits, vegetables, tree program, cut flowers.

On a motion by Mary, seconded by Leslie, Bill will draft a PSA and email it to committee members.

- Resolving issues around farm stand sales – The Zoning Board of Appeals states that you can sell what you grow on a parcel of land but you cannot have a non-family member selling at the stand. Tim related an incident at his stand.
- Discussion about finding easier ways to file 61A: Hank said it may need state legislative appeal (O’Leary and Atsalis). Bill will check with the Farm Bureau to see what it would take to simplify. A subset of 61A may be finding strategies for farmers who are struggling to pay taxes.

Other Business:

Bill led a discussion on projects for the Ag Comm :

A local stable requiring a permit to compost horse manure;

Cape Cod Oyster, Banning docks and piers in recreational areas

New Business:

Issues from road run-off/Salt and its affect on cranberries. It was suggested that this committee could be helpful to the town, DPW and Mass. Highways to make a recommendation about Salt use and its impact on Storm and Road run-off.

Shellfishermen also have concerns about road run-off – especially North Bay and West Bay. If there are areas that have severe drainage problems from Sandwich to Barnstable, this committee could make a recommendation.

Hank urged the AgComm to be proactive and come up with recommendations.

Bill mentioned that in the Steering Committee there was discussion about farmers causing problems for other farmers by ignoring good practices.

We need to determine what are the issues, how do we prioritize them and what can we do to accomplish some community impact.

Agenda Items:

- Follow Hank's recommendation to set up sub-committees such as:
Government Relations, Marketing, Board of Health, invite other to come and support the sub-committee structure (like Les Hemilla from the Shellfish Comm)
Sub-committees can make formal reports to the full committee.

The next meeting is 2/20/08 at 7 pm. At that ime we will announce the meeting schedule for the year.

Adjournment:

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 9 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Mary Knoble, Secretary