

## Lanesborough Agricultural Commission Meeting Minutes – March 13, 2008

**Attendees: members - Prudy Barton, Pete Gallant, Marv Michalak alternates - Darlene Newton, Aimee Thayer**

The meeting opened at 7:05 p.m. in the Planning Board Room at the Lanesborough Town Hall.

1. **Minutes** of February 7, 2008 were reviewed by the members. A motion was made, seconded and passed unanimously to approve the minutes.
2. **Ag in the classroom** - Marv reported that transportation costs to his greenhouse for students from Lanesborough Elementary School were prohibitive so parents were invited to bring the kids down. He set up an experiment at the school growing tomato seeds in which some students are participating. Prudy mentioned that transportation costs for Ag in the Classroom projects may be something we could apply for funding for and at the very least, the problem should be reported to the State Ag in Class organizers. Also, Marv said that Lenore, one of the Ag in Class folks, promised the availability of an entire curriculum package surrounding greenhouse operations and when he tried to follow up on that was directed to contact Vermont. Prudy attended an Ag Com workshop and brought back literature covering many aspects of ag. The suggestion to produce a brochure for Lanesborough Agriculture was discussed again and the commission will probably work on that.
3. **Farm Inventory Survey** - Darlene presented some tabulated results from the survey. Just under 2000 acres were reported as farmed with 222 tillable, 1047 wooded and 121 in pasture. 17 acres were reported fallow and 153.0 in hay. Surveys indicated horse farms as the largest reported segment of Ag in Lanesborough after woodland ownership. Problems encountered included trespassing issues and complaints from neighbors. Respondents indicated that APR and Chapter 61 were topics they were interested in knowing more about. Some folks reported a desire to expand their operation with many hoping to plant blueberries. Also, issues of development and encroachment of development were mentioned as concerns. The survey generated a 20% response rate which the commissioners were very happy about. Members agreed that the results will generate a basis for further development of Commission activities.
4. **Warrant Article** - Pete talked to Paul Boudreau regarding the inclusion of a warrant article to set up an account for the Ag Commission to handle any funds received.
5. **Massachusetts Agricultural Products Resolution** - Aimee suggested that the AgCom offer, for inclusion on the town meeting warrant, a resolution that states the preference of the town to purchase locally produced agricultural products for governmental bodies including the school. This would allow the town to take advantage of provisions in Mass General Law that provide for the expenditure of up to 10% extra to purchase Massachusetts grown products and to so state upon the issuance of bid requests. Pete informed everyone that the annual Town Meeting is likely to be a long meeting and held over the course of 2 nights. In light of this, members decided not to advance the resolution at this time and may revisit this at a later date.
6. **Grant funds** - members discussed the presentation given at a USDA Rural Development meeting on their energy grant program and value-added grant program held at Town Hall on March 5<sup>th</sup>. The meeting was attended by 35 people including farmers, small business owners and non-profit organizations. Aimee provided energy contact information for members and grant information to Prudy to share with local farmers as it came up.
7. **Farmers' Market** - members discussed the signage issues for the farmers market at the Berkshire Mall after an inquiry from mall representatives regarding the availability of signs. Aimee indicated that the Mass DAR signage program seemed to apply only to individual farms but she would inquire further.
8. **Rabies Clinic** - Aimee and Prudy agreed to both contact Craig Swinson to follow up on the possible scheduling of a rabies clinic as a fund-raiser for the AgCom. Pete pointed out that the appointment of an animal control officer will most likely drum up some business for such an event.
9. **Letter of Congratulation** - Members agreed to send a letter, which Prudy offered to compose congratulating Representative Guyer upon his receipt of an award for his support agriculture in the state legislature.
10. **Environmental Bond Bill** - Members agreed to sign on, as a Commission, to support the Environmental Bond Bill. Aimee will sign up for the Commission.

### Adjournment and next meetings

Members confirmed meeting dates for April 3, May 1, June 5, no July meeting and August 7, 2008 at 7:00 p.m. each date in the Planning Board Room at Lanesborough Town Hall. A motion was passed to adjourn at 8:43 p.m.