

Lanesborough Agricultural Commission Meeting Minutes – April 12, 2007

Attendees: regular members - Prudy Barton, Pete Gallant, Marv Michalak
alternate members - Aimee Thayer
guest - Craig Swinson, Lanesborough Animal Inspector

The meeting opened at 7:04 p.m. in the Planning Board Room at the Lanesborough Town Hall.

Review of Minutes - The minutes from February 8th were reviewed by the commission. A motion was made, seconded and passed to accept them as written. No meeting was held in March due to lack of a quorum.

New Business

1. **Craig Swinson, Lanesborough's Animal Inspector**, attended the meeting by invitation and outlined his responsibilities for the Commission. There are 3 main duties he performs as the inspector.
 - a) First, he conducts an annual animal census. Since his time as inspector, he has conducted 3 counts based on the list he received from the previous inspector. He has completed the census for all locations with a couple of exceptions for sites he has yet to locate. The information gained from the census is not for the purposes of excise tax but rather to guarantee the welfare of the animals and be able to respond efficiently in the event of a bio-security issue. The information gathered is of a confidential nature specific to the goal of the census. These censuses are required to be done during the months of October through January. This is a timeframe, in the opinion of the Inspector, which is not conducive to appropriate assessment of the animals' living conditions. Our Inspector would prefer to have a staggered schedule for site visits to more adequately evaluate the condition of the animals.
 - b) Secondly, the inspector is required to respond to and carry out quarantines in the event of an animal bite to protect the citizens and other animals in the town from rabies. He is required to capture the offending animal if possible and conduct the appropriate response. This varies depending on the circumstance. He shared that the only death in Massachusetts from rabies was the result of a bite from a bat, although others have been treated for rabies. He explained the complicated process of ascertaining an animal's status in regard to rabies. Mr. Swinson suggested the idea of re-establishing a rabies clinic in Lanesborough starting next spring. Vaccines and veterinarians are available for this event.
 - c) Lastly, the animal inspector is responsible for inspecting animal care and checking for certification of vaccinations at circuses, fairs and petting zoos. Annually, he has inspected the circus that travels through with a stop at the Berkshire Mall.

The Commission offered to assist the inspector in locating the sites he has not yet visited. Also, a copy of the town Zoning-by-Law was provided to Mr. Swinson to assist in the assessment of the appropriate areas for livestock and equines as he is sometimes called to assist in those type of animal related issues. After discussion, the members agreed to sponsor the rabies event and will discuss this with the Town Clerk so licenses can be issued concurrently for participating animals if possible. Proceeds from this event will be used for activities of the Commission as we are not funded by the town.

2. **Annual Town Meeting Warrant** - the Commission learned that a warrant item on the town meeting agenda seeks, in part, to prohibit the tapping of Sugar Maple Trees on public trees. Members agreed that this was ill-advised and caused no damage to appropriately tapped trees. Also, the sugaring of trees provides an aesthetic appeal to the town and an additional income for Lanesborough's farmers. The commission agreed to oppose this article at the town meeting unless the prohibition on tapping of trees is removed.
3. **Mediation Workshop** - Berkshire County Ag Commissions are seeking to schedule a workshop on mediation in the next couple of months. Members expressed interest in attending. As information becomes available Aimee will pass it on to Prudy for the Commission.

Old Business - Farm Inventory Survey - The final draft of the Farm Inventory Survey was reviewed. A rewording of one of the questions and an adjustment of the response deadline to "within thirty days" from receipt was agreed upon. Once finalized, this Commission would like to include the survey in a future town wide mailing and will charge the mailing to the Animal Inspector's budget at his invitation.

Adjournment and next meetings

Members set the next meetings for May 3rd and June 7th scheduled at 7:00 p.m. in the Planning Board Room at Lanesborough Town Hall and noted the Town meeting on May 8th and Town Election on May 15th.

A motion was made, seconded and passed to adjourn at 9:20 p.m.