

Approved Minutes - August 5th, 2021 (approved 10/6/2021)  
Weston Agricultural Commission

Board Members In Attendance: Yet-Ming Chang, Avery Chaplin, Lise Revers, Diana Chaplin, Kent Lundberg

Members of the public in attendance: Julie Hyde, Pam Hess, Jeri Ikeda,

Citizens Comments: Julie Hyde stated she is happy the Ag Com has become active again of recent and hopes for future meetings Ag Com will invite people who might have an interest in Agricultural issues in town.

Meeting minutes from 5.6.21 approved by Diana Chaplin, Yet-Ming Chang & Avery Chaplin

New Board Member Introductions: Lise Revers owns Beechwood Stables and recently purchased the Anza Farm next door. She plans to build a boarding barn for horses and is considering planting orchards on the property. She shared she has a horse in the Olympics this year. Her hope is that the town can begin to have a conversation about open space and agriculture.

Kent Lundberg is an electrical engineer professionally. He comes from two families who are both organic farmers in California. He served on the board at Land's Sake. Helps to run his family's farms in California presently.

Yet-Ming Chang reintroduced himself to the new board members. He and his wife Jeri Ikeda have a farm on GunClub Lane. They have lived in town for 10 years. They tried to find someone to farm their property. Then they met Jen and Pete Hashley and Jen suggested she could teach them how to farm. They began to raise meat chickens and Bee Hives.

Avery and Diana introduced themselves. They presently have 8 hives and just starting raising cashmere goats for fiber. They are passionate about working to alleviate soil deficiencies on their farm.

Julie Hyde introduced herself. She was raised on Wellesley St. Gateways Farm. Has a vibrant lettuce bed. Boards horses but is starting to slow down her farm operations. She and her husband Pete raised hydroponic tomatoes and when she shut down this operation it reduced her carbon footprint by 80% in one day. The green house is now available as a shelter but no longer planning to heat it in the winter. Her family recently sold land to the town. Concom looks after this recent acquisition and prefers not to mow it, and is letting it become a pollinator and butterfly area with Milkweed overgrowing. It is becoming hard to work the land and faces challenges as aging farmers.

Pam Hess is the executive director of Land's Sake. She is excited to be involved with the Ag Com and share in the agricultural history.

What are the priorities over the next 12 months?

Getting a list of people in town who are farming and have land in agricultural status. Include 61B & C as well as 61 A properties on the list. Learning how many residents have 61a over 61B land. As a way to hear what these farmers are doing and learn about their issues and concerns. Hear from Jen and Pete Hashley on the state of farming in general and how to promote more farming in Weston.

Create a list of Weston farms. Send out a letter to these farms to join a farming network.  
Create a website resource of people looking to farm and those that have land that they would like to be farmed.

Ag COM to become a conduit for linking farm land to farmers

Challenge in Weston is that we have land to farm but no housing where farmers can live and no public transportation to help farmers get to land to farm it/

It seems Con Com is planning to get into the business of growing trees and is moving away from agricultural use of its lands

Yett introduced the 61B info. To qualify it is required to have a forestry plan drawn up by a forester to identify areas or places to be forested. Need 10 acre minimum Very broadly defined.  
Consider how to reverse carbon in the atmosphere. Improving soil and making it healthier allows it to catch/absorb carbon better.

Combination of agriculture and forestry doesn't have to be clearly defined.

What other initiatives does the Ag COM want to focus on?

Build a website?

Wild Blueberries and Raspberries grow well in wetter areas. U pick it farm would be possible. These patches can be hard to maintain without using pesticides and usually must be covered because of birds and wildlife wishing to consume berries, but they are very productive and fruitful if allowed to produce. Rick Fulip recently purchased a Blueberry farm in a neighboring town.

Right Lock Farm in Arlington where Archie is the executive director is a pick your own berries operation.

Pam Hess suggested the Ag Com look at some local community farms to see who has the local expertise.

Carol Burnes has Blueberries on her farm.

Lise has 10 Apple Trees and in the fall has many Apples.

Pam Hess has to leave the meeting but plans to be in future attendance.

Out reach concepts

Pick your own concepts

Right To Farm Bylaw in Weston would be protected by AgCom if it was ever threatened. This is a unique feature of Agriculture in Weston.

The issue is many people don't even know it exists.

The question was posed, does the Right to Farm protect farms from developmental impact?

It is a sword to protect our farms actual existence and protect the ability of a farmer to actually carry out farming activities

Everyone at the meeting is encouraged to become a member of the Massachusetts Farm Bureau

Julie Hyde remembers the origins of Weston's Right to Farm Bylaw.

Doug Gillespie wrote the state of the art protection

Ban of fur farming passed at last town meeting and Ag Com was not involved or contacted

There was once a fur farm near the existing Biogen site

Kent is interested in Con Com's role of how they plan to manage land in agriculture. Ag Com needs to work with Con COM to create a plan for a balance between pollinators and agriculture. Waltham Community Farm activities in Weston was interrupted as a result of the pandemic. They were supposed to at least plant cover crops on the land they had been working. When the town took over this land and its ongoing management it seems to have gone to rack and ruin. Mowing is rarely done and is much more expensive. Would be able to find outside farmers to come and advise. Should we be trying to get an Ag Com member on the Con Com? Would Con COM be receptive to the Ag Com getting involved to ask what ConCom is planning to do with their town land? Are AgCom and ConCom in conflict with each other? Would be a good role and more productive to be working together.

Manure spreader at Beechwood Stables has made paddocks much more vibrant for grazing. The plan is to remove the large piles of manure and compost from Anza land and reuse this composted soil.

Moving forward to meet every other month

Next meeting is Oct. 6 from 6-7

Respectfully submitted by Diana Chaplin