

Adams Agricultural Commission

Meeting Minutes

July 18, 2023 at 7:00 p.m.

Adams Town Hall

8 Park Street, Adams, MA 01220

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TOWN CLERK
ADAMS MASS.

CLERK _____

In attendance: Meg Bantle (MB), Sonia McWhirt (SM), Christina Satko (CS), Loren Steins (LS), and Natasha Bordeaux (NB)

Also present: Joe Novak, Becky Ferguson (BF)

1. Call to order 7:02 pm
2. Old Business
 - a. Approval of the minutes
 - i. Motion to approve LS. Seconded by NB.
 - b. SM report on an Adams Farmers Market. Saturday Markets already exist across Berkshire County. We could aim to host a yearly farmer's market for the holidays.
 - i. MB to contact Berkshire Grown about helping to plan an annual event.
 - c. History of farming in Adams.
 - i. SM contacted Ryan Biros from the Adams Historical Commission and asked about Adams farming history. Biros asked us what kind of information we are looking for. SM to attend Adams Historical Commission meeting, which is not posted yet.
 - d. New Farmer Workshop
 - i. Sarah Gardener Williams College, Jamie Pottern American Farmland Trust, Jessica Camp from MDAR, all said over email that a beginning farmer workshop would be possible.
 - ii. American Farmland Trust has a "Berkshire resource guide" that has a lot of contacts, a lot of overlap with our current list online.
 - iii. <https://farmland.org/berkshire-farm-futures>
 - iv. Jessica Camp manages the beginning farm programs for MDAR, shared many resources:
 1. "Exploring the small farm dream," a 5-week course for starting a new farm or making a hobby farm a business.
 2. "Growing your Farm Business" a course for businesses with 2+ years.
 3. "Farm Succession course
 4. Camp shared helpful beginning farmer contacts: NRCS Jack Loomis: John.Loomis@USDA.gov, Bailey Albert from FSA: bailey.albert@usda.gov.
 5. A "Tips for applying for Grants" video on the MDAR website.
 - e. New Agricultural Commissioner visit already planned through Berkshire Grown.

- i. MB to contact Berkshire Grown to suggest a visit to Adams so we can connect with her as a committee.

3. New Business

- a. Letter or email to farmers in Adams.
 - i. Letting farmers know about the new information on the Adams website listing grants and resources.
 - ii. A contact email and phone number for the Agricultural Commission.
 - iii. A summary of information that we have gathered for new farmers.
 - 1. MB suggests including, "If you know someone who might be interested in a potential workshop, please have them contact us."
 - iv. Ask farmers to please share family history/ photos/ documents for the agricultural history of Adams project.
 - v. SM suggests including a survey.
 - 1. LS suggests that a line reading, "Please contact us with any questions," instead of a full survey.
- b. SM asks BF to have an Agricultural Commission email. BF says that yes that should be possible and she will look into it.
- c. MB asks if flood relief information should be included?
 - i. Our letter will not be timely enough and we don't want the letter to be too long.
- d. SM and MB to draft a letter together with the editing help of Community Development.
 - i. Letter to be short, and to mostly emphasize the resources that are available on the website already and to encourage people to contact us.
 - ii. MB to draft something in the next week to send to SM.

4. Announcements and Good of the Order

- a. No-Till Perennial Clover Workshop event 7/20/23 4-6 pm at Sawyer Farm with UMASS Extension and SARE.
- b. NB Wetlands update: Most agricultural practices are exempt unless there is disruption (building, digging, land moving, etc) inside of the wetland buffer zone.
 - i. [https://www.richmaylaw.com/understanding-massachusetts-wetlands-restrictions-and-the-agricultural-exemption/#:~:text=The%20WPA%20requirements%20anyone%20performing,local%20Conservation%20Commission%20\(ConCom\)](https://www.richmaylaw.com/understanding-massachusetts-wetlands-restrictions-and-the-agricultural-exemption/#:~:text=The%20WPA%20requirements%20anyone%20performing,local%20Conservation%20Commission%20(ConCom))
- c. Flood relief: MDAR has a 2023 flooding guidance and resources guide
 - i. From Berkshire County FSA office: Following the rain/storms/flooding events of July 2023, Berkshire County Farm Service Agency is asking any affected producers to report damage to the FSA County Office as soon as possible. Reporting damages is important for ensuring relevant FSA programming is made available to eligible producers. Also be reminded that several programs require timely reporting of losses/adverse situations in order to maintain eligibility. To report damage, please contact the

Berkshire County FSA office at 413-443-1776 or email

Rebecca.Savarese@usda.gov.

- d. Frost crop loss survey through UMass Extension, from Berkshire Grown: The freeze events of February 3-4 and May 18, 2023, had significant impacts on agricultural sectors including tree fruits, berries, vegetables, ornamentals, and others. Now that losses are evident for most crops, UMass Extension and our partners* hope to generate timely reporting on losses at the state and regional levels. **If you produce agricultural crops (including nursery stock) and you experienced crop losses due to the February 3-4 deep freeze and/or the May 18th freeze, please report them by filling out this** survey:
https://umassamherst.co1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_b2BKrQXOUpV8aNg
SURVEY DEADLINE: July 31

- e. **Register now for the 2023 NOFA Summer Conference!**

- i. Online and in person at Worcester State University, Worcester, MA
Online Monday, July 24 - Thursday, July 27, 2023. In Person & Online:
Friday, July 28 & Saturday, July 29, 2023. Register at:
<https://whova.com/web/q8nNAu7gY-gdFcVWrRsRDND1164u2ChDbb-xpev%40nzE%3D/>

- 5. Next Agricultural Commission meeting
 - a. September 19th at 7 pm, or September 26th as a backup.
 - b. Letter to be published before then.
- 6. Adjournment
 - a. 7:55 pm CS motion to adjourn. LS seconded.