

Adams Agricultural Commission

Meeting Minutes

September 19, 2023 at 7:00 p.m.

Adams Town Hall

8 Park Street, Adams, MA 01220

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In attendance: Meg Bantle (MB), Sonia McWhirt (SM), and Loren Steins (LS).

Absent: Christina Satko (CS) and Natasha Bordeaux (NB)

Also present:

1. Call to order 7:00 pm
2. Old Business
  - a. LS motion to approve the minutes from July 18th. MB seconded. Minutes approved unanimously.
  - b. SM to try and attend Adams Historical Commission meeting tomorrow evening (09/20/23).
  - c. New farmers course info. SM received a follow up email from Jessica Camp and Jamie Pottern to focus on exploring the "Exploring the Small Farm Dream." Two courses to be available: November/ December in Western Mass, location to be decided. Second class to be January/ February location to be decided.
    - i. MDAR is also currently scheduling the "Growing your Farm Business Planning Course" for 8 weeks January to March, potentially in West Springfield but location to be determined.
    - ii. Both of these courses are available on their website.  
<https://www.mass.gov/info-details/agricultural-business-training-program-abtp>
  - d. New disaster relief link available on the Adams Agricultural Commission website.  
<https://www.mass.gov/info-details/2023-agricultural-flooding-guidance-resources>
    - i. This link also includes a survey about hay needs post flooding.  
<https://forms.microsoft.com/pages/responsepage.aspx?id=Fh2GPrdIDkqYBowE2Bt7KmJFJUo4qbNOnloFv3E-SHZUN0NTNUhTQzQ5NVVJRksSzSjJXVUIYNzJZVC4u>
    - ii. More funding for disaster relief should be available through the MA Farm Resiliency Fund. Berkshire Grown and Berkshire Ag Ventures have been good resources for keeping up to date. <https://unitedwaycm.org/farmfund/>
    - iii. Emergency Farm Loans available through the USDA and FSA for freeze and rain and flooding. Applications open until March 2024.  
<https://www.fsa.usda.gov/programs-and-services/farm-loan-programs/emergency-farm-loans/index>
  - e. MB to email Berkshire Grown about the possibility of a Holiday Market in Adams.

### 3. New Business

- a. SM compiled a list of resources for New Farmers to be a resource for people until the New Farmer courses become available.
  - i. This list includes the MDAR resources list, the MEGA grant, American Farmland Trust's "Berkshire Farm Futures", and the USDA "How to Start a Farm: Beginning Farmers and Ranchers."
  - ii. This list to be posted to the Adams Ag Committee website.
  - iii. MB suggests adding local contact for Berkshire FSA and Berkshire NRCS
    - 1. Berkshire County FSA [Rebecca.Savarese@USDA.gov](mailto:Rebecca.Savarese@USDA.gov) 413-443-1776 ext 2
    - 2. Berkshire County NRCS [sylvia.munizgaya@usda.gov](mailto:sylvia.munizgaya@usda.gov) tel: 413-443-1776 ext 3
  - iv. SM to send to CS and NB in case they have any links to add.

### 4. Announcements and Good of the Order

- a. Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) has announced that **November 3, 2023 and March 8, 2024** will be the cut-off dates for applications for the Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) to be considered and ranked for 2024 funding. <https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs-initiatives/csp-conservation-stewardship-program>
  - i. CSP helps agricultural producers take the conservation activities on their farm to the next level. It provides a payment for maintaining the current conservation efforts on the land and covers part of the cost for producers implementing new conservation activities.
- b. American Farmland Trust and Land for Good are running a workshop called "The Nuts-and-Bolts of Farm Leasing: Securing Access to Farmland in Berkshire County" December 5th, 5:00pm - 7:15pm, (Snow date: December 12th, 5:00pm - 7:15pm), The Stationery Factory (North Room), 63 Flansburg Ave, Dalton, MA.
  - i. To benefit farmers looking for land and farmers looking to lease land.
- c. Steve Melito from Adams is looking for manure to run a pilot program converting manure to biochar. [www.farmerslog.us](http://www.farmerslog.us)
- d. BAV is running "Harvesting Hope: Building Climate Resistant Farms." Regional experts and farmers will convene for a panel discussion addressing the impact of climate change on local agriculture, the adaptive measures adopted by Berkshire-Taconic farmers, and the contributions of Berkshire Agricultural Ventures to these efforts. This event is hosted by Berkshire Agricultural Ventures and the Roaring Brook Family Foundation: Date: Thursday, September 21, 5:00-7:00 pm, Location: Berkshire Botanical Gardens, 5 W Stockbridge Rd, Stockbridge, MA 01262 (Intersection Routes 102 & 183) <https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSes6IYTERq0ccIQb36oVpzChTgPaQXOSOf5IK-3ya8tWMYMq/viewform>

5. Next Agricultural Commission meeting
  - a. Aim for November 14th at 7 pm or 21st at 7 pm. Email NB and CS to confirm.
6. Adjournment
  - a. Motion to adjourn LS, MB seconded, all approved 7:54 pm.