



Town of Adams

Massachusetts 01220

Board of Health Department

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Approved

Adams Board of Health – Public Meeting Minutes

1st Floor Mahogany Room in-person only

Wednesday, December 7, 2022

BOH Members Present: Chairman Dr. David Rhoads, Co-Chair Dr. Amy Oberlin,

BOH Members Not Present: Member Jess Wilson

Others Present: Meg Bantle - Full Well Farm, Howard Rosenberg-Board of Selectman Member, Michelle DeRose-Administrative Assistant, Sarah Lesure-Code Enforcement Officer, Gerry Garner – Building Commissioner, Atty Edmund St. John – Town Counsel, Brian Rhodes – iBerkshires

Call to Order: Chairman Rhoads called the meeting to order at 4:00pm and noted that the meeting is being recorded.

Presentation: Full Well Farm, Meg Bantle, public health issues in local farming


Dr. Rhoads introduced Meg Bantle of Full Well Farm. A presentation provided by Ms. Bantle was shared on the screen by Dr. Rhoads. Ms. Bantle is a co-owner and operator of Full Well Farm located on East Road, Adams MA. They land they grow their crops on are on the ancestral homelands of the Mohican and Wabanaki peoples and is the same land that her grandparents had their dairy farm (Burnett Farm).

They are a no-till, hand scale farm that uses organic practices to grow vegetables and cut flowers within $\frac{3}{4}$ of an acre. They manage approximately 3 acres of land for cover crop and preparing for next year.

Their primary sales are through CSA (Community Supported Agriculture, North Adams Farmers Market and some local wholesale including Wild Oats, Firehouse Café and some restaurants in North Adams.

CSA is similar to a farm subscription. Other farms have this option where you go to the farm and pick out the product you want pay for it in advance to be picked up each week for the time period you are paying for. Full Well Farm has a Box Share Model that allows them to offer deliveries to different communities especially those that have transportation challenges. The farm is not easily accessible by public transportation. This past season, they had 126 CSA members across our summer and fall and flower (spring, summer and fall) shares. Of those shares, 38 out of 82 shares for the year were sold through community programs or at a subsidized rate or 46% of their veggie CSA.

Some of the community programs purchase shares through insurance based program such as CHP. If you have a specific insurance policy and have qualifying health needs, then you may be able to purchase shares through them at a subsidized rate.

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They also sell shares to Berkshire Food Project which is funded by the shared bounty program at Berkshire Grown and subsidized by Multi-Cultural Bridge (Pittsfield) for low income residents in Williamstown and North Adams.

Full Well Farm follows the Hand Scale, No-Till Farming practices which means they do not till the soil and use ergonomically efficient hand equipment as opposed to large tractor equipment. This practice helps the growing of future crops and maintain soil life such as worms, bugs and other microorganisms which in turn produce healthier crops. No tilling also allows the soil to absorb and hold the water for longer periods of time when there are drought conditions.

They are currently working on their Climate Battery Greenhouse Project which will reduce their dependency on fossil fuels and allow to grow later into the season without using as much propane. The structure they have built houses winter vegetables such as radishes, turnips, kales, lettuce and bok choy and to date, they have used zero propane to heat that space.

This structure is a battery that will hold onto the thermal heat that gets transferred underneath during the warm months. If you were able to see underground, you would see layers of tubing and soil. How this works is as the day goes on, the sun warms the air within the greenhouse and the fans will turn on moving the warm air underground which radiates into the soil. As the sun sets, the temperature in the greenhouse cools and the fans turn on moving the air back from the ground up into the greenhouse and this helps to avoid the use of propane to heat.

The typical greenhouse that does not have the battery functionality, the greenhouse may get too hot inside and would require to vent the hot air out otherwise, the heat would cause the plants to wilt and die. At night, you would use propane to heat the greenhouse to keep the temperature stable.

Their goal is to be a 3 season growing farm and to have local produce available to our community. This is their first trial and error period to determine the best growing temperature to last as long into the season as possible. Notes on the presentation document states "Based on an energy audit done on the project we estimate fuel savings of over 1,700 gallons of propane per year which is over \$6,000 at the current price."

Dr. Oberlin inquired if the "heat" can be stored during the summer months. Ms. Bantle answered that the peak time to store is late August through October as there is a limit as to how much can be stored. The system may be able to be used to cool and dehumidify in the summer time.

Dr. Rhoads inquired about the water they use. Ms. Bantle said they have a well. She mentioned that they grow on approximately $\frac{3}{4}$ to 1 acre of land. They use tarps over the land to convert hayfield to growing space without using tillage. It takes about 1 year to kill the hay grasses. Dr. Rhoads asked how they handle vermin. She answered that much of their issue with vermin is deer. They had tried an electric fence, but that has not worked. She said she is considering applying for a grant for a vinyl fence to be positioned along the perimeter at least by the forest. Dr. Rhoads asked about composting. Ms. Bantle said they do not produce their own compost. They cut the greenery of the plants at the season end and put them in the fields to naturally break down. They do not produce enough waste or the equipment to make their own compost.

Dr. Rhoads asked what got them into flowers. Ms. Bantle said that the idea came to them during covid because flowers tend to bring a spark of joy during times of crisis. They noticed a gap in the Berkshire market where there is not locally grown flowers. They have a small patch of native perennial flowers and also most of their product is non-native annuals.

Mrs. DeRose asked where you can purchase. Ms. Bantle said that next week they are purchasing a shed to be placed down entrance to their farm which be a self-served. Currently there is just a farm stand that is in disrepair. The best way to find them currently is at the Winter Farmer's Market at 85 Main Street, North Adams, MA on the first Saturday of the month. They have all the CSAs for next season available on the their website (www.fullwellfarm.com) as well as the flower CSAs.

Ms. Bantle asked what the health initiative connection is. Mr. Rosenberg said that Adams is working on a health initiative to address underlying health issues and he also has the yoga studio. He said that healthy food is critical and is impressed that people could get a healthy food prescription. Ms. Bantle said that there is a specific insurance that offers this and cannot recall which one it is. Other insurances also subsidize the CSA program. Mr. Rosenberg added that much of the initiative is the social isolation can be toxic to your health. Humans are not meant to be isolated and when they are, high levels of cortisol and neurotic behavior can be found. This idea is to bring people together and hold each other accountable of their personal health goals.

Dr. Oberlin asked what percentage are people taking advantage of the insurance CSA program. Ms. Bantle said that 18 small shares and sold 63 total shares. It is grant funded and work with many local farms. They also work with SNAP. Their hope is to get connected to Adams Council on Aging and expand to local Adams schools. They are looking more into delivery programs as well. Dr. Oberlin mentioned that we can spread the word at the Board of Health table at Town Events.

Ms. Bantle left after the presentation.

Public Comment:

None

Public Hearing: None

Approval of Minutes:

- **October 12:** Dr. Rhoads has provided edits. Dr. Oberlin motioned to approve with edits. Dr. Rhoads seconded. Both voted YES unanimously.
- **November 9:** Dr. Oberlin requested to review next month to allow time to review. Dr. Rhoads agreed.

Code Enforcement Officer:

Mrs. Lesure provided high level report. She said that she had just come from her first housing court hearing which she cannot elaborate on too much now, other than that she has now experienced it and is comfortable with the judge's ruling and moving forward with the case. She is following up on following up with many correction orders that she had issued in the past couple of months and has performed food and liquor license inspections for the establishments in town over this past month.

Old Business:

- **Review of board's web page: coronavirus message, tobacco/vaping, etc.**

Dr. Oberlin and Dr. Rhoads reviewed Dr. Oberlin's suggested edits. Because this information is public information and the board is compiling it, Dr. Rhoads will finalize the edits suggested and the information page will be shared on the website.

Mrs. DeRose let the board know that the Code Enforcement Office report was missed on the agenda.

- **Planning task force update: *"Up and Adams" Wellness Initiative 2023***

Dr. Rhoads shared a Berkshire Public Health Alliance Mini Grant Request form in which the BOH must approve the request. Up and Adams did receive a partial of the grant funds requested and Dr. Rhoads suggested to Mr. Rosenberg to apply for the mini grant for \$3500 since there is not a budget appropriated to this cause. The Board can vote to approve the submission of this application to the Alliance. Dr. Oberlin asked for clarification of the Board of Health's role in this program. Dr. Rhoads said this program is beneficial to public health in Adams and the Board is supporting this initiative. Essentially the Project Manager, Erin Lenski, becomes their subcontractor in improving public health. Dr. Oberlin asked about where the funds would be distributed, if they came to us and then we give to Up and Adams. Dr. Rhoads said they would find out at the dinner tomorrow night. Dr. Oberlin asked if you can apply for more than one grant. Dr. Rhoads is unsure and said that so far, 4 towns have applied for it and there may be funds left over. The process of how the funds will be documented formerly and this will be addressed accordingly.

Dr. Oberlin motioned to approve this submission of the mini grant application in the amount of \$3500 to the Berkshire Public Health Alliance for the Up and Adams wellness initiative. Dr. Rhoads seconded. Both voted YES unanimously. Dr. Rhoads will sign and submit it. Mr. Rosenberg will notify the Project Manager.

Mr. Rosenberg left after this agenda item.

- **ChokeSaver training still available; contact the list**

Dr. Rhoads said that there was a training session recently and is unsure if there will another training available. Berkshire Community College will be running periodic ChokeSaver trainings at their locations

- **Submission of our sanitary code regulations to the central DEP registry**

Dr. Rhoads stated the Mrs. DeRose found the minutes related to the bag ban and mailed all the information to the DEP via certified mail. The return receipt came back unsigned.

- **Budget needs**

Dr. Rhoads had requested meeting with the Town Administrator and the Accounting Director Jay/Crystal and had not heard back. He sent an email to them on Nov 28th indicating the specifics for the line items such as health promotions and Health Board training for the fiscal year 2024 budget. He envisions this to be under Board control and include the authority to print colored brochures and posters, purchase give-a-ways such as tick removers, sample packs of insect repellent, sun screen, travel and registration fees to trainings and health promotion events, setting up public health reminder stations such as brochure racks in public spaces. \$1000 would be a good

target. The deadline is next week and he is hoping to have a discussion with them before that deadline. He had not received a response from his email as of yet.

New Business:

- **Expanding opportunities to recycle**

Dr. Rhoads had reached out to an apartment owner and an apartment manager in town that he knows personally and had not heard back from them as of yet. He also reached out to Jeff Kennedy who is an Adams resident and is also the Health Agent in Williamstown and is awaiting a response as well. He will see him at the dinner tomorrow and will inquire with others as well.

Dr. Oberlin had attended the Massachusetts Housing Code zoom webinar and said that there is something in the State code that states that landlords have to provide adequate receptacles for recycling and rubbish removal. She believe it was specific to a number of units, but had not had a chance to review the code. Mrs. Lesure said she believes it to be 2 or more units. Dr. Oberlin was also unsure what adequate receptacles would actually mean. Dr. Rhoads said that State would expect the local Board to determine what adequate is. Mrs. Lesure answered most likely a secure top and the receptacle should hold the contents without overflow until pick up or discarded appropriately. Dr. Oberlin will review the code 105 CMR 410 for the sanitary code. She will share with Mrs. Lesure and Dr. Rhoads the information from the zoom webinar.

- **Grant opportunities for improving waste disposal & recycling**

Dr. Rhoads indicated that there was one half to 2.5 million in grants available. He is awaiting a response from his emails sent to Community Development and Town Administrator. There is a list of projects that could be funded by this and there are many improvements that could be made at our Transfer Station that would increase its efficiency. The letter of intent is due next week.

- **Any Other?**

none

Local & County Updates:

- **Any?**

none

Upcoming Events:

- **12/8: BCBOHA Fall Dinner; probable topic: PFAS)**

Dr. Rhoads mentioned the fall dinner is tomorrow night discussing PFAS.

- **BCBOHA calendar**

Dr. Rhoads said in a couple of weeks, the Mass Health Officers Association is offering a free webinar guide to public health that is 1 hour long.

Review Mail:

- **Specialty Minerals 3rd party inspection reports**

Dr. Rhoads said because Specialty Minerals is a waste disposal site, it is required by Dept of Environmental Protection to be inspected and inform the Board of Health it's progress. Dr. Rhoads requested the 7 missing reports from the months during COVID which were just received yesterday. There is nothing notable in the reports and basically describes their process.

- **Other?**

Mrs. DeRose suggested to check the in box in the Town Administrator Assistant's office for any physical mail.

For the Good of the Order

Dr. Rhoads shared that the Empower Act died in this legislative session to allow Massachusetts municipalities to lower voting age to 16-17 years of age without a home rule petition. What that means that Adams could apply to the legislation for approval on a case by case basis. Atty St. John confirmed that Home Rule Amendment you have to have Town Meeting approval of the bylaw and then go to the legislature for legislative approval. By bypassing the home rule amendment process, its allowing the Towns through Town Meeting to end it right there without petitioning the legislature.

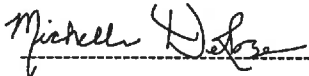
Dr. Rhoads said that by starting to vote and 16-17 years, they tend to have a higher rate of life long voting behavior. Greater than 18-19 years of age.

Schedule Next Meetings: January 11 due to the timing of the holiday week; No Informational session will be scheduled.

Adjournment:

Dr. Oberlin motioned to adjourn. Dr. Rhoads seconded. Both voted Yes unanimously. Adjourned at 5:29pm

Respectfully Submitted,



Michelle DeRose
Administrative Assistant

1/17/2022

Date