

Town of Adams Massachusetts 01220-2087

BOARD OF SELECTMEN

**TOWN HALL BUILDING
8 PARK STREET**

Wednesday, January 12, 2022, 6:00 p.m.

**BOARD OF SELECTMEN
MEETING MINUTES**

CALL TO ORDER: On the above date the Board of Selectmen held a workshop at the Town Hall Sun Room. The meeting was called to order at 6:00 p.m. by Chairman Duval. Present from the Board of Selectmen were Chairman Duval, Members Nowak and Rosenberg. Also present were Town Administrator Green, Community Development Director Coughlin, Brian Rhodes from iBerkshires, and Administrative Assistant Dunlap. Attending via Zoom were Vice Chair Hoyt and Albert Averill of the USDA. *Member Blanchard was absent.*

CALL IN

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/82874160906?pwd=enFqZm9hTkxER0w4ejlHMzJFNEFkdz09>

Meeting ID: 828 7416 0906; *Passcode:* 820062

One tap mobile: +13017158592,,82874160906#,,,,*820062# US (Washington DC),
+13126266799,,82874160906#,,,,*820062# US (Chicago)

Dial In: (929) 436 2866 US (New York), *Meeting ID:* 828 7416 0906; *Passcode:* 820062

NEW BUSINESS

Farmland of Local Importance Designation: *Albert Averill of American Farmland Trust. Member Nowak* introduced Mr. Averill and gave some background on the Farmland of Local Importance Designation. *Mr. Averill* explained that he did a review of the soils and land use and has identified potential farmland of local importance. He advised that he worked in soil survey, mapping and classification for 40 years, and works to help municipalities establish farmland of local importance to make more areas eligible for federal funding. He noted that Williamstown and Sheffield have had this work done already, and several Berkshire towns are involved. He explained that National Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) is a co-signer in the program. He showed a PowerPoint on important farmlands and noted the designation is being done to increase long-term potential for farmland preservation program eligibility. Lands suited for agricultural use extends eligibility for federal funding and gives landowners an option for the future of their land. The Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP) and Agricultural Land Easement Program (ALE) were reviewed. The land owner is paid the development value, less the agricultural value of the land in exchange for maintaining agricultural suitability. NRCS provides 50 percent of funding and an identified partner provides the other half. He noted that MDAR is the biggest partner. Eligibility is based in part on soils, and tests for the quality of land for agricultural use. Eligible land must have at least 50 % of important farmland soils, which is outlined in the soil survey. It was noted that within the soil survey there are classes including prime farmland, unique farmland, farmland of statewide importance, and farmland of local importance. Prime farmland doesn't have too many rocks, is not too wet or steep.

Unique farmland is based on and defined by specific crops, such as cranberry bogs. *Farmland of Statewide Importance* are soils suited for agriculture but don't meet all of the criteria but have limitations that can be overcome. Farmland of Local Importance has potential for further recognition of being important farmland, which is land suited for crop production that is not classified as important farmland soil in the soil survey. Land is in addition to farmland for the production of food, feed, fiber, forage and oilseed crops, identified by the local agencies concerned. The agency cannot publish it by itself and requires a local authority to do it, such as a municipal official that represents the agricultural interests of the town. An example of Farmland of Local Importance is land that could be good farmland that needs to be drained to make it useful. Areas identified with this classification are Bucklin, East and Walling Roads. The identification process is to verify the land is not currently classified as prime or unique farmland, or farmland of statewide importance, then to compile evidence of suitability with consideration of conservation tenets and wetland conservation compliance provisions of the Food Security Act. It is then verified by NRCS soil science staff or their designee with qualifiers as applicable in order to become officially designated. Signatories include the local official and the NRCS State Conservationist, and it is then recorded in the NRCS Field Office Technical Lab. This process follows the code of federal regulations. A brief review of documents drawn up for Williamstown took place. Eleven soil types have been identified in Adams. One needs verification and there are twenty-four fields pending suitability that are currently not under protection. Next steps were identified and it was noted that assistance may be needed to both verify cropping and land use history, and identify a signatory. It was explained that the signatory must be a duly recognized official such as the Conservation Commission, Agricultural Commission or Board of Selectmen Chair. Burlingame Hill Road land was briefly discussed and noted as having fields that are mowed and baled, but being a little wet depending on the weather. Mr. Averill can be reached at Albert.averill@usda.gov, or al.averill77@gmail.com. Member Rosenberg inquired how much opportunity Adams has for agricultural land, and it was explained that there is some potential but not a large amount. Any land that can be recognized as farmland of local importance may have the benefit of protection. It was explained that nothing may come of it but it can be extra insurance for folks to pursue preservation over other options. It was explained that NRCS has a pool of money under the Agricultural Land Use program but can only come up with 50% of the money for value of the land. A partner comes up with the other portion to purchase an easement from the landowner to preserve the land. Someone must monitor the easement so the agricultural land is not compromised. The landowner can make a donation of the other 50 percent to preserve the land. Anyone who has funding and who can monitor the easement is eligible to be a partner. The process of determining soil type was briefly reviewed. Different types of agricultural uses, such as maple syrup, were noted as grey areas and are not necessarily associated with the soil survey. It was pointed out this designation gives the land owner more of an option and lets the land owner make the choice. *Community Development Director Coughlin* noted that 800 acres of land in Adams is in APR currently, and all of it is on the east side of town. He advised he will work with Mr. Averill to identify where other eligible properties are to match up with the existing APR. It was noted that there are no restrictions or cost to the program. The next steps are that Mr. Averill would draw up documents for review and verification of other areas in town. If the Town wants to enter the program, documents would be drawn up for signature, and then sent to the NRCS conservationist to become an official document stored in the NRCS website available to the public to get a list of important farmlands. The solar field on East Road was noted as lost valuable farmland but an economic decision. It was confirmed there is no cost to the town to get the designation and do the work. There are no survey tools used currently to get landowner input on effectiveness.

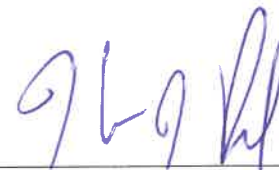
ANNOUNCEMENTS, GOOD OF THE ORDER: *Vice Chair Hoyt* announced that there will be two vaccination booster clinics on Friday and Saturday at Saint Elizabeth of Hungary Parish. *Berkshire Community College* will hold a vaccination clinic next Saturday. *Member Nowak* advised there is a merger taking place between CSX and Pan Am and hoped the Berkshire Scenic Train will not be affected. He noted that Senator Hinds and State Representative Barrett will be testifying, as there is a lot to lose. The main interest will be with the passenger rail, and it may be possible to work with them for the East-West Passenger Rail. The Surface Transportation Board is overseeing the merger. *Member Rosenberg* complimented the DPW for keeping the roads clear during the recent ice storm. *Chairman Duval* advised there is a lot on the agenda for next Wednesday. *Community Development Director Coughlin* announced that Kerry Raheb is looking to open a retail marijuana operation and will be holding a public outreach meeting at the Visitors Center later this month. He asked Board Members to attend.

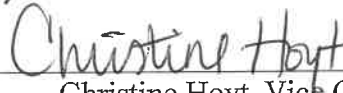
ADJOURNMENT: *Motion made by Member Nowak to adjourn, second by Member Rosenberg. Vote: unanimous. Motion passed. Meeting adjourned at 6:49 p.m.*

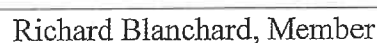
Respectfully Submitted,

Deborah J. Dunlap, Recording Secretary


Joseph Nowak, Member


Howard Rosenberg, Member


Christine Hoyt, Vice Chair


Richard Blanchard, Member


John Duval, Chair