

## **Auburn Agricultural Committee**

Minutes 8 31 21

**Location:** Senior Center

**Recorder:** Dave Griswold

**Staff attending:** Jay Brenchick

**Attending:** Dave Griswold, Bill Sylvester, Kathy Shaw, Joe Gray, Ed Michaud, Katie Boss, David Bell, Scott Blanchard

**Excused:** None

**Absent:** Michelle Melaragno (communicated intention to resign)

**Guests:** Karen Scammon, Joe St Peter (City Assessors office)

**Call to Order:** 5:35 pm

**Public Participation:** See Guest Presentation

1. **Guest Presentation** Kathy Scammon, City Assessor, presented hypothetical examples for valuation impact of proposed changes to expand Residential Strip Zones into the Ag Zone, and information concerning State programs for forest, farm and open space. See attached slide deck. Public Q&A followed.

Q&A Discussion points:

- A presentation to the Planning Board on the proposed changes is scheduled for Sept 14
  - Neighborhood sales information is a significant driver of valuation.
  - Neighborhood definitions are not clear.
  - Question about how many property owners are affected by the proposed change. Not available for presentation at the meeting.
  - About 1150 acres of Ag Zone will be reclassified if the proposal is adopted
  - Assessors are unable to determine the full economic impact of the plan until individual properties are identified and analyzed. Important details are not yet available.
  - State programs: approximate number of parcels involved: Tree Growth, 48; Farmland, 53; Open Space, 6
2. **Regular Meeting** called to order at 6:58
  3. **7 27 21 Minutes** approved

#### **4. Work Groups**

- a. Dave will check with Sabrina Best about the availability of the Story Walk this fall, in order to develop and post An Ag Committee presentation.
- b. Kathy will check with S&W Conservation District about possibility of a farm tour this fall. Focus audience to be City officials and staff. Kathy, David, Scott, Ed, Bill and Katie have potential tour stops.
- c. Joe will complete Farm inventory for next month's meeting.
- d. Katie will contact Auburn schools about using local food products
- e. Bill is working on Forest acres inventory.
- f. Scott is contact with LAWPC concerning the future of their property. Nothing to report at present.
- g. Dave is coordinating with Conservation Commission about action on invasive species. He is tending an Emerald Ash Borer trap in Auburn for the Maine Forest Service.

#### **5. New Business:**

- a. Michelle Malagnaro will resign shortly, so a new member will be needed.
- b. Consensus to collaborate with the Conservation Commission on appropriate initiatives.
- c. Kathy will work with Liz Allen to increase Ag Committee presence on City website.
- d. Potential to have Maine Farmland Trust make a presentation on easements.
- e. Discussion about approaching the City Council for a small budget for speakers, printed materials, etc.
- f. Jay will explore possibility of earmarking TIF funds for low interest Ag loans, as well as develop information on other outside funding opportunities for farmers and landowners.
- g. The letter to the Planning Board that was developed following the July meeting was submitted. Much of the public comment at the last Planning Board meeting mirrored our concerns.

#### **6. Action Items**

- a. Dave will check on availability of the Story Walk this fall and lead effort to develop materials with Kathy and Katie.
- b. Kathy will work on developing a farm tour.
- c. Katie will contact school dept about using local food.
- d. Joe will complete farm inventory.
- e. Jay will explore CIP potential for ag/forestry sector.
- f. Kathy will draft a budget request.

**Next meeting:** Tuesday, 8 28 2021, 6:00pm, location City Hall.

**Pending agenda items:**

1. Producers questionnaire/survey
2. Status of proposal to expand strip zoning.
3. Work Plan Development
4. Council presentation re Order 79-07202020
5. Food Sovereignty Law
6. Good Food Council of L-A to discuss urban agriculture opportunities.
7. Compost facility discussion
8. Craft a vision for agriculture in Auburn and share with community
9. Draft language to address inconsistencies between regulation of cannabis and ag infrastructure development.
10. Story Walk
11. Maine Farmland Trust Easement presentation

**Adjourned:** 7:30 PM