

## **Auburn Agricultural Committee**

Minutes: 11 30 21 Approved: 12 28 21

**Location:** ZOOM

**Recorder:** Dave Griswold

**Staff attending:** Jay Brenchick

**Attending:** Dave Griswold, Bill Sylvester, Kathy Shaw, Joe Gray, Katie Boss, Chris Carson

**Excused:** Dave Bell, Scott Blanchard

**Absent:** Ed Michaud

**Guests:** Jim Johnson, Natural Resources Soil and Water Conservation District, Lewiston Office

**Call to Order:** 6:08 pm

**Public Participation:** None

1. **Guest Speaker:** Jim Johnson, from Lewiston office of Natural Resources Soil and Water Conservation Districts spoke about programs.
  - a. **EQUIP (Environmental Quality Improvement Program)** Emphasis on urban agriculture includes Auburn. Cost share is available at 90% for new farmers and 75% for farmers in the business for more than ten years, for soil improvement, high tunnels, building improvements, pollinator habitat etc. Program is open to any farmer, even those growing vegetables for their own consumption. A farm and tract number is necessary. Deadline for applications is 1 21 22.
  - b. **Agriculture Management Assistance Program** funds are available for irrigation, high tunnels and forestry.
2. **Dam relicensing:** Dave reported that the Conservation Commission is monitoring the Lewiston Falls FERC relicensing process and members have participated in several calls. Study requests are to be submitted in January. Ideas are being developed with City staff involved.
3. **Solar Project Tour:** Kathy will provide details for a solar project tour to be scheduled on 12 15 on Riverside Drive.
4. **Local Food Initiative:** Katie spoke with Auburn Schools Food Director. The Schools work with Blackie's who is an aggregator for other local farmers. Katie helped connect the Food Director with Bells Farms to explore small potatoes. Potential to invite Blackie's manager to a future meeting.

5. **GIS Farm and Forest Inventory:** Joe is working with Rosemary Mosher and has photographed 70 points in South Auburn.
6. **Funding:** Jay Clarified that Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) funding is for City infrastructure investments. A committee request for operating funds could be pushed to the City Council for the December 6 meeting. Dave and Katie proposed a motion that: *“The Chair be empowered to send a letter to the City Council prior to the 12 6 21 Council meeting, requesting reasonable funding for Agriculture Committee promotions, tour expenses and the like.”* The motion passed by unanimous consent.
7. **GOAUBURN website:** It was suggested that the website being developed could be used to promote Agriculture and forestry in Auburn.
8. **Zoning Update (strip expansion):** Kathy reported that she had provided the Ag Committee letter to all Planning Board members at the recent meeting. No public comment was positive about the proposed change. The Planning Board voted not to recommend the change.
9. **Story Walk:** Dave reported that the display had stayed up in November. There was discussion about developing another display for spring 2022.

#### **New Business**

1. **PFAS:** discussion of the State notification about PFAS in Auburn. State will be studying high priority sites. Note taken of the warning not to eat deer in the Fairfield vicinity, a high PFAS area.
2. **Forest Carbon Storage:** Dave shared a list of Climate-smart Forest Management Practices from an article in the Maine Woodlands November newsletter.
3. **Cannabis vs Ag Infrastructure regulations:** State and Federal regulations do not recognize cannabis production as agriculture. There is no need for the committee to get involved.
4. **2022 Work Plan:** It was agreed that this would be a focus of the December meeting, as it will take some time.
5. **L-A Farmers Market:** Kathy is working on planning a new location. Lewiston Space off Main Street is not available. Great Falls location is under consideration.
6. **Education and Outreach:** Dave reported that the Conservation Commission is working to set up a meeting or webinar about Brown Tail Moth presented by the Maine Forest Service. Plan is for February-March so that info about nest pruning will be available before spring. More info to follow.

#### **10. Action Items**

- a. Joe will complete farm inventory.

b. Kathy will draft a budget request.

**Next meetings:** Tuesday, 12 28 2021, 6:00pm, location Community Room, City Hall.

**Pending agenda items:**

1. Producers questionnaire/survey
2. Work Plan Development
3. Council presentation re Order 79-07202020
4. Possible presentation by Blackie's manager about aggregation for School Department
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. Maine Farmland Trust Easement presentation

**Adjourned:** 7:18 PM

