

## **Auburn Agricultural Committee**

Minutes 5 25 2021

**Location:** Senior Center / Pettengill Park, outside)

**Recorder:** Dave Griswold

**Staff attending:** Jay Brenchik excused

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

**Excused:** Michelle Melaragno

**Absent:** Joe Gray

**Guests:** None

**Call to Order:** 5:42 pm

**Public Participation:** None

1. **4 27 21 minutes:** approved.
2. **Committee Work Plan Discussion.** Discussion centered on Katie's draft.
  - a. Dave will check with Rosemary Mosher about the possibility of extraction Farmland, Soils and Forest information from GIS.
  - b. The extent of conflict between ag/forestry activities and other neighbors was discussed. The consensus was that concerns arise occasionally but consistently. There is no obvious solution. Outreach, communication and education have the most potential. Dave explained the Sustainable Forestry Initiative (SFI) hotline for people with concerns about forest harvests to call to initiate an investigation and feedback. Maine SFI certificate holders respond to calls, meeting with the landowner/logger/forester to ask questions, communicate concerns, find out what is going on, encourage corrective actions when appropriate, and communicate back to the caller. Calls are confidential and SFI responds to the caller within 7 days. Municipal Code Enforcement Officers have been periodically notified about the program which has been in place for 20 + years. The number to call is 1-888-SFI-GOAL.
  - c. There is potential to provide an ag/forestry tour for Council, staff, teachers, etc. after Labor Day

- d. There is potential to use the Ag Committee web page to provide information to the public.
- e. The current draft work plan needs to be expanded to include action steps and target dates.

**3. Conservation/Open Space Form-Based Code: request from City Council to review draft language**

- a. Language to be applied to a mapped zone largely adjacent to the Riverwalk was reviewed and discussed.
- b. The Committee had a number of questions and concerns.
  - i. Why is the mapped area defined as “Open Space”, rather than recreation, etc.?
  - ii. Why does the designated area not extend to the Little Androscoggin River and include the new Anniversary Park?
  - iii. The Committee does not favor removal of the agriculture and forestry language.
  - iv. The Committee is concerned that the current language gives CMP final word about potential projects within the mapped area.
  - v. The Committee is concerned that language applied to the mapped area could set a precedent for other parts of the city which could be rezoned in the future. Other potential Open Space areas may need different language developed by more discussion and review.

**4. Zoning Working Group update and discussion**

- a. Solar projects should be regulated to ensure they can be returned to tillable land following the useful life of the project.
- b. Cannabis projects should be considered an industrial use. They are subject to less regulation than ag projects such as a slaughter house. Ag Committee needs to develop language to address both issues.
- c. Changes to zoning should simplify the guidance, not complicate it.
- d. Noted that agriculture and natural resources are not the same.
- e. Discussion of the potential widening of strip zones from 450 to 700 feet for residential zone within the ag zone.
- f. Discussion of the need for a variance process, which the Committee favors instead of changing zoning to resolve potential conflicts. Katie agreed to raise the issue with City Manager.
- g. Discussion of potential Legacy Farms, with a working definition needed.

**5. Food Sovereignty Legislation**

- a. Katie will reach out to Sen. Claxton for an update.

**6. Community Survey and Communications**

- a. Liz Allen is working on the survey

**7. New Business – None**

**8. Action Items**

- a. Dave will follow up with Liz Allen about postings approved at 4 27 meeting
- b. Dave will reach out to Rosemary Mosher about potential to map farms, soils and forest.
- c. Katie will continue to develop Work Plan considering tonight's discussion.
- d. Katie will check status of Food Sovereignty bill with Sen. Claxton.

**Next meeting:** Tuesday, 6 29 2021, 5:30pm, location tba.

**Pending agenda items:**

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

**Adjourned:** 7:10 PM

