

**MERRIMACK AGRICULTURAL COMMISSION
MINUTES
FEBRUARY 12, 2020**

Meeting called to order by Chairman Bob McCabe at 7:00pm

Present: Paul Drone, Ron Miner III, Bess Parks

Absent: Don Miner

Comment from the Press or Public

NEW BUSINESS:

- a. **SUMMER MARKET:** Bob has received two signed vendor contracts for the summer farmer's market opening June 10th, 2020. To increase market visibility, the commission will contact the advertising representative for the Union Leader for information to include market information in the paper's Farmer's Market listing. Cost and frequency will be discussed at the March 11, 2020 meeting. Bob mentioned that due to a postage increase from .50 cents to .55 cents for a first-class letter, he was short \$15.00 for the vendor mailing. Paul made the motion to reimburse Bob the \$15.00 for postage stamps, Ron seconded, motion carried 4-0-0.
- b. **COMMUNITY GARDENS:** The garden manager will start processing applications March 16, 2020. Previous year's gardeners must return their applications by April 13, 2020. New Merrimack resident gardeners may begin submitting their applications on April 14, 2020 and must return their applications by May 4, 2020; and all other non-resident gardeners may begin submitting their applications on May 5, 2020. Once garden preparations are completed, plot numbers will be e-mailed to the gardeners the first week in May 2020. The water will be turned on May 11, 2020, with the gardens officially opening on May 25, 2020. Applications are available at (merrimackgardens@gmail.com). Bob inquired if the board would approve in asking Xenia in the Merrimack town purchasing department to assist in purchasing the twine, flags and stakes needed in preparing the garden plots. Paul made the motion to accept as requested, Ron seconded, motion carried 4-0-0.
- c. **ANNUAL REPORT:** Bob submitted the Agricultural Commission annual report to be included in the 2019 Merrimack Town Report.
- d. **BUG ALERT:** Emerald Ash Borer and firewood management go hand in hand. A commercial firewood producer can be targeted for outreach, but the person who's moving firewood recreationally is difficult to target. There is a high value placed on easy accessibility to firewood – people don't want to get to their camping area and not have firewood to burn. A Northeast study involved interviewing close to 300 campers who brought their own firewood to campgrounds. More than 25% of campers said they always or often brought firewood from home. Ninety-two percent had heard of invasive forest pests, but fewer than 25% could name one unless they were prompted. Campers tend to believe that firewood is safe to transport. Recreational firewood is a documented invasion pathway for several invasive forest pests. It's a challenge to regulate, but prime for continued outreach opportunities. Effective and cost-effective ways to access local firewood vendors are key.

- e. HORSE SENSE: Along with sleighing, another winter equine sport becoming popular in some regions of North America is Skijoring. Skijoring, the Nordic sport in which a skier is pulled over a cross country course by a horse under tack, began in the 1800's as a means of transportation for the army dispatches and became popular among adrenaline junkies at the time. Competitive skijoring was included in the Nordic Games, a predecessor to the Winter Olympics. Baron Pierre de Coubertin, founder of the modern Olympics, helped bring the sport in as an Olympic demonstration sport at the 1928 St. Mortiz Games. Without the jumps and obstacles common in modern courses through, the sport didn't catch on and was quickly dropped from the Olympic scene. Skijoring is still popular in Scandinavia and Switzerland. With spring and mosquitos just a few months away, it is a good time to decide with your veterinarian for your equine's immunizations. Many veterinary clinics offer discounts when appointments are booked ahead when the veterinary staff will be in your area.
- f. WORKSHOPS/SEMINARS: See Attached.
- g. TREASURERS'S REPORT: Balances as of January 31, 2020. The Agricultural Commission Farmer's Market Fund Account is \$4,532.77. The Community Garden Fund Account is \$1,518.27, with a combined total of \$6,051.04. The Winter Farmer's Market Fund account is \$165.42.
- h. MINUTES: The January 8, 2020 minutes were read with Paul making the motion to approve, Ron seconded, motioned carried 4-0-0.

No Comments from the Press or Public.

Comments from the Commission: Bob received an e-mail form "The ReGenerative Roots ". The ReGenerative Roots Association has been developing a community farm and associated school/educational programs over the last four years. The lease on the property they are currently farming is on a year to year basis. Their goal is to secure a 2+ acre in an outright sale, or long-term lease, and reaching out to local cities and organizations to explore potential possibilities. Bob will communicate with Andrew L. Morin, Esquire and Executive Director of the ReGenerative Roots Association with the offer of garden plots at the Community Garden if that would help with their programs.

Paul would like to remind all residents to "not" feed the deer. Deer naturally restrict their food intake conserving their energy by leaving the shelter as little as possible in the winter months to make their fat layer last through the season and into spring. When humans put out supplemental feed, the scent lures these mammals out of their shelters. The supplemental feed upsets their digestion system, and the deer can starve to death.

Motion to Adjourn: Ron made the motion to adjourn at 7:30pm, Paul seconded, motion carried 4-0-0.

The next meeting will be held March 11, 2020 at 7:00pm in the Matthew Thornton Room, East Wing.

Respectfully Submitted

Bess-Arden Parks
Acting Secretary