

**MERRIMACK AGRICULTURAL COMMISSION
MINUTES
JULY 8, 2020**

Meeting called to order by Chairman Bob McCabe at 6:50pm

Present: Paul Drone, Ron Miner, Bess Parks

Guest: Holly Stone

Comments from the Press or Public

NEW BUSINESS:

- a. **INTERVIEW WITH AGRICULTURAL MAJOR:** Holly Stone, a 2020 Merrimack High School student joined the meeting to interview for the \$500.00 dollar scholarship the commission offers Merrimack students continuing their education in an agricultural related field. Holly is a first-year student of Unity College, Unity, Maine majoring in environmental science. Unity College is a liberal arts college offering undergraduate and graduate education based on sustainability sciences that emphasizes study of environmental and natural resources. Holly indicated she loves all things in nature, with an interest in ornithology (the study of birds). Holly's goal is to obtain a master's degree and would like to work for the NH Fish and Game department upon graduation. After a favorable discussion, Paul made the motion to approve a \$500.00 scholarship to be awarded to Holly Stone. Ron seconded; motion carried 4-0-0.
- b. **SUMMER MARKET:** The summer farmer's market opening was delayed a week due to the covid-19 virus. With safety precautions in place the market opened Wednesday, June 17, 2020 at Vault Storage, Daniel Webster Highway North in Merrimack. Nine vendors with a variety of fresh produce, plants, wine, honey, maple syrup, natural pain relief and more, welcomed new and old customers. More vendors are anticipated as the season progresses. The market is being advertised in the Union Leader (Wednesdays edition), face book and lawn signs. Lawn signs are available for any Merrimack resident who would like to help promote the market and support the Agricultural Commission. Residents interested can stop by the market or contact Bob at (bob.mccabe@comcast.net).
- c. **COMMUNITY GARDEN UPDATE:** Half of the garden plots were rented this planting season. Plots are still available for anyone wanting to plant early maturing vegetables or flowers. There has not been a woodchuck problem this season, but an upsurge in the rabbit population has gardeners concerned. The rabbits eat through the plastic fencing to decimate the growing produce. The inter-net offers many solutions from spreading coffee grounds, to soaking pinecones in vinegar and planting onions around the perimeter of the garden space. Contact the UNH Cooperative Extension service for humane solutions for rabbit control. (answers@unh.edu). Bob reported the water faucet for the gardens was leaking and needing repair. Bob purchased two replacement spigots, one for the repair and one spare should the leak reoccur. The two brass fittings cost \$15.00 dollars, and Bob asked the board for reimbursement. Paul made the motion to reimburse Bob \$15.00 dollars for the two brass fittings to repair the community garden water faucet. Ron seconded; motion carried 4-0-0. Ron has completed painting the message board.

- d. **MEMORIAL TREE DISCUSSION:** The memorial tree in memory of Arthur “Pete” Gagnon has been approved by Town Council and the Parks and Recreation manager Matthew Casparius. A Red Delicious apple tree will be planted at Wasserman Park soon in memory of “Pete’s” many years of service to the Town of Merrimack and support of the Agricultural Commission. Bob will select/purchase and plant the tree when the site at Wasserman Park has been cleared. Paul made the motion to approve up to \$500.00 dollars for the purchase of a Red Delicious apple tree in memory of “Pete” Gagnon. Ron seconded; motion carried 4-0-0.
- e. **DISCUSSION OF WINTER MARKET FUND:** It was a unanimous decision to transfer the Winter Market Fund Account of \$165.42 dollars to the Summer Market Fund Account. There is no plan to resume having a Winter Farmer’s Market at the present time, whereby this fund account will be considered dissolved. Paul made the motion to transfer the Winter Market Fund Account of \$165.42 to the Summer Market Fund Account. Ron seconded; motion carried 4-0-0.
- f. **HORSE SENSE: Hot Weather Horse Care Tips:** Summer heat can be dangerous for horses, resulting in dehydration, lethargy and general malaise. Severe heat stress can even cause diarrhea and colic. Here are some tips to help keep your equine comfortable during the heat of summer. 1. Choose cooler turnout times. 2. Provide shade, a run-in shed is best. 3. Move the air with fans. 4. Misting your horse is more effective than hosing off. 5. Provide fresh, cool water. 6. Slow down the work, cool down slowly and offer frequent sips of cool water. Untack and sponge the horse off with cool water. 7. Stick to a schedule. 8. Avoid Sunburn. 9. Clip horses with longer hair coats. 10. Know your horse and signs of heat stroke. Know your horses normal, temperature, heart and respiratory rates. An elevated heart rate that does not return to normal in a reasonable period could indicate heat stroke. Consult your veterinarian for advice and treatment.
- g. **TREASURERS REPORT:** Balances for March 31, 2020. Agriculture Commission Summer Farmer’s Market Fund Account is \$ 4,839.10, the Community Garden Fund Account is \$1,578.29, with a combined total of \$ 6,417.39. The Winter Farmer’s Market Fund Account is \$ 165.42. April 30, 2020 Summer Farmer’s Market Fund Account is \$ 4,824.10, the Community Garden Fund Account is \$ 1,514.64, with a combined total of \$6,338.74. The Winter Farmer’s Market Fund Account is \$165.10. May 31, 2020 Summer Farmer’s Market Account is \$4,824.10. Community Garden Fund Account is \$1,727.71, with a combined total of \$ 6,551.81. The Winter Farmer’s Market Fund Account is \$165.10. June 30, 2020 Summer Farmer’s Market Fund Account is \$4,174.47. Community Garden Fund Account is \$ 1,895.71, with a combined total of \$ 6,070.18. The Winter Farmer’s Market Fund Account is \$165.10.
- h. **BUG ALERT:** With summer in full swing, bugs of all shapes, sizes, good and bad are active. Favorite among gardeners are the pollinators, which include the Monarch Butterfly. The monarch caterpillar (the larvae stage of the monarch butterfly) feeds only on the leaves of milkweed plants. From these it gains all the nutrition needed to change into the adult form. The adult monarch consumes nectar from flowers, minerals from mud puddles and liquids from fruits. While feeding on nectar they pollinate many wildflowers. To attract them to your backyard, leave out slices of banana, oranges or watermelon, and plant a variety of flowering plants.

MINUTES: Correction under New Business, Item b. Summer Market (Approve \$55.00 dollars for Bob McCabe to purchase postage stamps for Summer Market and Community garden

mailings). Paul made the motion to reaffirm the approval of \$55.00 dollars, payable to Bob McCabe for the purchase of one roll of postage stamps to complete the Summer Farmer's Market vendor mailing and Community Garden applicant mailing, Ron seconded, motion carried 4-0-0. Ron made the motion to accept the minutes with correction, Paul seconded, motion carried 4-0-0.

No comments from the Press or Public.

Comments from the Commission: Bob asked the board for reimbursement of \$35.00 for postage card stamps, and \$75.00 for a course on invasive species that he attended. Paul made the motion to approve reimbursement of \$35.00 dollars for postage card stamps, also \$75.00 for the invasive species course payable to Bob McCabe, Ron seconded, motion carried 4-0-0. Bob to check with the town accountant on the \$89.00 dollar charge for hand sanitizer, and \$288.00 for 400 face masks.

The Commission received word that board member Don Miner has moved to another State, therefore no longer able to continue to serve on the Merrimack Agricultural Commission board. Don managed the winter farmer's market and attended the summer market selling his homegrown farm products.

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

The next meeting will be held August 12, 2020 in the Matthew Thornton Room, East Wing.

Respectfully Submitted

Bess-Arden Parks
Acting Secretary