

**MERRIMACK AGRICULTURE COMMISSION
MINUTES
JANUARY 11, 2017**

Meeting was called to order by President, Bob McCabe at 7:10 p.m.

Present: Ron Miner III, Bess Parks, Paul Drone, Don Miner

Guests: Jolee Chase, 4 H Leader; and Shaelagh Nelson, Summer Market Assistant

No Comments from the Press or Public:

New Business:

- a. **4-H CONTRIBUTION OVERVIEW:** Jolee Chase, 4 H Leader, was invited to join the commission to provide specific information on the weight scale to benefit the 4 H State wide. The scale would provide accurate weighing of livestock, at the beginning of the fair season, with a final weigh in, as the livestock are sold at auction. Jolee brought 2 examples of different models, with weight limits of 2,500 lbs., and 3,000 lbs. Weight indicators were also shown. Costs were not available. Don, also presented information a similar model from Advanced Scales, with a 5,000 lb. weight limit. Approximate cost would be \$1,995, weight indicator \$225.00, optional LED board \$750.00. Concerns were proper handling when moving the scale from place to place storage and warranties. Scales are easily unbalanced, needing recalibration for accuracy. The question arose regarding leasing rather than owning. Don will look into that option. Jolee will also inquire of other 4H groups i.e. Eastern States, MA and Fryeburg, ME Fair on the scale set up they use, handling and maintenance. Both she and Don will report back their findings at the February 8, 2017 meeting.
- b. Shaelagh Nelson, our summer market aide, joined our meeting, giving an update on her environmental science studies at the University of Vermont. She indicated that they go on many field trips to the outlying farm community checking on nitrate contamination near waterways and other environmental hazards. While she has applied for an internship at the Boston Aquarium for the summer break, it is hoped she will be able to return to assist at the summer market again this year. She will let Bob know as timely as possible if she will be available.
- c. **SUMMER MARKET:** It was brought to Bob's attention by the accounting department that were three outstanding receipts. \$6.47 for a certified piece of mail, \$9.40 for stamps, and \$54.37 for an ink cartridge. totaling \$70.24. Don made the motion to approve payment, Paul seconded, motion carried 5-0-0. The market is still need of a parking lot attendant with notices being posted for a volunteer or paid position.
- d. **WINTER MARKET:** Don reported vendor participation has increased with 8 presently available with varied offerings of produce, baked goods, chocolate, soaps/lotion, honey, maple, cheese. Hopefully, the market will see more customer traffic with the recent article in the Nashua Telegraph. Don informed the commission that he has put the purchase of the small advertising signs on hold after discussion on the possible purchase of a mobile sign. The small signs would have been difficult to use with frozen ground and/or snowbanks. The money appropriated for the small signs could be redirected toward the mobile purchase, if and when one is found suitable for our needs.

- e. **DIRECTION FOR 2017-IDEAS:** Bob encouraged the board to continue bringing new ideas/information of interest to share with the board and public.
- f. **UPCOMING WORKSHOPS/SEMINARS:** See Attached
- g. **BUG ALERT:** Most invasive species hibernating.
- h. **HORSE SENSE:** Bess continued with Part II on Buying Hay, "What Questions Should You Be Asking"? Does the dealer specialize in horse hay, what is the forage quality, and species, as different legumes and grasses have different nutrient values? Where harvested, are the fields fertilized, how cured and stored. What are payment options, delivery cost? Is there a discount for volume or cash? Is there assistance to help stack, and if so, is there an additional cost. How much hay does the dealer/farmer bale each year to ensure a consistent supply? It is advisable to be somewhat knowledgeable about hay species, 1st and 2nd cuts to make an informed decision.
- i. **TREASURERS REPORT:** As of 1/9/2017, the Summer Market balance is \$5,139.18. Community Garden balance \$3,435.32, with a combined total of \$8,574.50. The Winter Market balance is \$1,280.00.
- j. **HISTORY OF FARMING:** Villages and Soil Summary. Ron gave an informative overview of how Merrimack was divided into four villages, Reeds Ferry in the Northern sector, Souhegan Village in the center. Thornton's Ferry in the South East, and South Merrimack Village in the remaining southern section of town. South Merrimack was named "Hard Scrabble" due to the difficulty tilling the soil and farming in that area. The definition of "Hard Scrabble" indicated it "involved hard work and struggle" to farm, dig wells, and construction sites for building. Residents still have a hard time digging and tilling today, having to "pin and pour" foundations with the difficulty getting past the rocks. A farm on Amherst Road, was actually named "Hard Scrabble Farm".
- k. **MINUTES:** The December 14, 2016 draft was reviewed. Ron made the motion to accept as read, Paul seconded, motion carried 5-0-0.

No Comments from the Press or Public.

Comments from the Commission: Bob invited the board members to continue to contribute to the meetings and provide information that they may be aware of regarding other agricultural based topics.

Motion to Adjourn: Don made the motion to adjourn, seconded by Bess, motion carried 5-0-0.

Next Meeting: February 8, 2017.

Respectfully Submitted
Bess-Arden Parks
Acting Secretary