

**MERRIMACK AGRICULTURAL COMMISSION**  
**MINUTES**  
**APRIL 11, 2018**

Meeting called to order by Chairman Bob McCabe at 7:05 p.m.

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

No Comments from the Press or Public

**NEW BUSINESS:**

- a. **WINTER FARMERS MARKET UPDATE:** The Winter Market remains slow, both vendor participation and customer traffic. With a new growing season close at hand, produce vendors will be busy planting and tending to their new crops. The market will continue through the month of April 2018, then close until the start of the Summer Market, June 13, 2018. The Board discussed using a portion of the remaining Winter Farmers Market account balance \$500.00 dollars, of (\$723.75) to fund advertising for the Summer Farmers Market by renting, one side of the bill board near the Merrimack Post Office; measuring approximately 10 feet by 18 feet. This would be subject to approval to the graphic design. Don made the motion, that upon approval of the graphic design, that \$500.00 from the Winter Farmers Market be used to rent the bill board space near the Merrimack Post Office, Daniel Webster Highway North, Paul seconded motion carried 5-0
- b. **SUMMER FARMERS MARKET:** Post cards to be mailed to prospective vendors. Bob asked for \$100.00 to cover postage costs. Paul made the motion to approve \$100.00 for the necessary postage, Don seconded, motion carried 5-0-0.
- c. **COMMUNITY GARDEN UPDATE:** Weather permitting, between April 23 through the 28, 2018, Bob will, with all male board members, rototill, stake, flag and put the strings up that divide the garden plots. The water will also be turned on at that time. Gardeners may access their assigned plots by the end of April.
- d. **UPCOMING WORKSHOPS/SEMINARS – SEE ATTACHED**
- e. **AG REPORT:** There are four top challenges facing pork farmers. 1. Trade, 2. Technology, 3. Health, 4. Labor. The National Pork Producers are hoping gene editing technology will one day help. Ron will provide more detailed information on this timely subject at the May 9, 2018 meeting.
- f. **BUG ALERT:** Beet and Spinach leaf miner. These small house size flies attack other greens as well, and between April and September lay small batches of eggs on the foliage. Larvae feed on the leaves, tunneling inside creating large irregular blotch shaped mines which turn brown and shriveled. The fully-grown larvae go in the soil where they spend the winter. There is no chemical control, but the use of barrier netting will prevent female flies laying eggs on the foliage. Crop rotation should be practiced, otherwise adult flies may emerge from over-wintered pupae in the soil and be trapped under the netting.

- g. HORSE SENSE: Transitioning horses to spring pasture. It is tempting to turn horses out into spring pastures at the first sign of green grass especially after a long winter. However, spring grazing should be introduced slowly and delayed until grasses reach 6-8 inches in height to optimize both the health of the horse and pasture. Begin grazing for 15 minutes, increasing until 4 -5 hours of consecutive grazing is reached, then unrestricted grazing can resume. It is also recommended to feed horses their normal hay diet before turning out to pasture during this transitioning period, to avoid rapid intake of pasture grasses. Dried hay is approximately 15% moisture compared to fresh pasture that is 85% moisture. The horse is a hind-gut fermenting herbivore that relies extensively on the microbes present in its gastrointestinal tract to be able to process forages. The microbes are a mix of different organisms that work together to the benefit of the horse. If the feedstuffs the microbes are utilizing change suddenly, there may be too little time for the microbial populations to adjust to the change. Instead many of them die, while others flourish, setting up a situation where toxins may be absorbed by the horse, resulting in digestive dysfunction and possibly colic. A gradual change from one feedstuff to another provides enough time for the microbial populations to adjust.
- h. TREASURERS REPORT: As of March 31, 2018, the Agricultural Commission Summer Farmer's Market Fund Account is \$4,449.43. The Community Garden fund account is \$2,496.55, with a combined total of \$6,945.98. The Winter Farmer's Market Account is \$723.75
- i. MINUTES: The March 14, 2018 minutes were read, with motion made by Don to accept, Ron seconded, motion carried 5-0-0.

No Comments from the Press or Public

Comments from the Commission: Ron, along with Justin Slez are collaborating on a video/pictorial project that will showcase the various activities/projects that the Agricultural Commission is involved with. They will produce highlights of the Summer/Winter farmers market, the Community Garden, and special 4-H projects, including 4-H showing and award events at the New Boston Fair. More information to follow in the up-coming months on this new endeavor.

The Community Garden information day held on March 21, 2018 at the John O'Leary Senior Center was well attended, many last year gardeners came to secure their favorite plots, pick up their applications/garden rules/free seeds, share gardening tips, and take a chance on a free garden plot. This year's lucky winner was Michelle Landry. There are still garden plots available; applications can be picked up at the Merrimack town hall or contact Bob at ([bobmccabe@comcast.net](mailto:bobmccabe@comcast.net)).

Ron made the motion to adjourn at 7:51p.m, Don seconded, motion carried 5-0-0.

The next meeting will be held May 9, 2018, at 7:00 p.m., in the Matthew Thornton Room, East Wing.

Respectfully Submitted

Bess-Arden Parks  
Acting Secretary