

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

Meeting brought to order by Chairman Bob McCabe at 7:04 p.m.

Present: Paul Drone, Ron Miner, Bess Parks

Guest: Charles Lafond

Comments from the Press or Public

NEW BUSINESS:

- a. **INTERVIEW with CHARLES “Charlie” LAFOND:** Charlie was invited to attend the monthly agricultural meeting as he expressed interest in possibly serving on the board. Bob gave Charlie a brief history of the commission, programs, accomplishments, and current support needs. Charlie is an avid organic gardener with interest in the environmental sustainability. He will send a letter of intent to Town Council should he decide to join.
- b. **SUMMER MARKET:** Despite scorching temperatures, one hundred and three customers came to the farmers market August 12th. Corn, all varieties of summer vegetables and fruits are now available. Wine, honey and natural pain relief and natural hand sanitizer products are also available. The market will be open until October 14, 2020.
- c. **COMMUNITY GARDEN:** Gardeners are now harvesting their produce. Rabbits continue to be a problem. Bob recommends using chicken wire around the plastic fencing to deter the rabbits from chewing through the plastic destroying the gardener’s crops.
- d. **MEMORIAL TREE FOR PETE GAGNON:** Excavation has been completed in the area selected to plant the red delicious tree in memory of Pete Gagnon. Bob will select and purchase hardy specimen from a reputable grower. Planting will take place when the temperatures are more moderate and less stressful for transplanting.
- e. **NOTIFICATION TO SCHOLARSHIP STUDENT:** Bob notified Holly Stone of the board’s decision in awarding her a \$ 500.00 dollar college scholarship. Holly informed Bob that Unity College, where she was enrolled, has discontinued their environment science programs. She transferred to New England College in Henniker, NH, to continue her studies.
- f. **HORSE SENSE: “Strangles”** It is the most diagnosed equine infectious disease in the world. The disease is spread via nasal secretions (snorting, coughing, physical nose to nose contact and pus from draining abscesses). The name calls to mind images of

a relentless force compressing a horse's throat so he cannot breathe, but the force is not something external, it comes from the inside of the horse's own lymph glands. Infectious bacteria invade those glands, causing abscesses that swell until they burst into torrents of thick yellow-green pus cascading from the nostrils of from beneath the jaw. While rarely "strangling" a horse to the point of death, strangles can still be painful and debilitating. Streptococcus equi is a survivor and has been around for centuries. It can hang around for days on equipment and people and can even in extreme cold and water. Contaminated equipment, including clothing, exposed skin/hair need to be washed thoroughly and horses, barns need to be quarantined. Despite research efforts, strangles continues to haunt our barns and fields, causing issues for our horses' welfare. Easily spread through long term "silent" carriers as they travel (Streptococcus equi) proliferates rapidly in unprotected populations. With advancing science and technology, researchers are homing in on better detection methods and vaccines to limit strangles spread.

- g. TREASURERS REPORT: Due to town auditing, the July 8, 2020 treasurers report was not available at the time of the August 12, 2020 meeting. The July 8, 2020 report will be read along with the August 12, 2020 treasurers report at the September 9, 2020 meeting.

NO COMMENTS FROM THE PRESS OR PUBLIC:

COMMENTS FROM THE COMMISSION: Bob has been notified by the Finance Department that all future commission mailings be posted through the town's postage meter rather than reimbursing Bob the requested amount from the commission's fund accounts that are approved and voted on by the board. Bob questions the reasoning behind this decision, as there would not be any significant savings in postage, also creating considerable inconvenience for himself with the mailing process in general. Bob will investigate the matter and report back to the board at the September 9, 2020 meeting.

MOTION TO ADJOURN: Bess made the motion to adjourn at 7:40pm, Ron seconded, motion carried 4-0-0.

The next meeting of the Agricultural Commission will be held September 9, 2020 at 7:00pm. In the Matthew Thornton Room, East Wing.

Respectfully Submitted,

Bess-Arden Parks, Acting Secretary