

City of Keene
New Hampshire

AGRICULTURAL COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES

Wednesday, September 10, 2015 3:30 PM City Hall, Second Floor Conference Room

Members Present

Councilor Carl Jacobs, Chair
Alan Bettler
Alison Welsh
Sarah Wilton
Marcia Duffy
Charles Daloz
Mark Florenz, Alternate

Staff Present

Michele Chalice, Planner

Members Not Present

Kathy Harrington

Others Present

Kenneth Stewart, Greenspace Project
Gallagher Hannan, Greenspace Project
Amanda Costello, Cheshire County
Conservation

1. Call to Order

Chair Jacobs called the meeting to order at 3:32 PM.

2. Minutes of Previous Meeting: July 9, 2015

Ms. Welsh made a motion to approve the minutes of July 9, 2015. Mr. Bettler seconded the motion which carried unanimously.

3. Rules of Procedures

Mr. Florenz made a motion to approve the Rules of Procedures. Ms. Welsh seconded the motion which carried unanimously.

Chair Jacobs signed the Rules of Procedures.

4. Keene's Farmers Market Update-Draft Letter Review

Chair Jacobs stated that the Committee asked the farmer's market to attend the meeting but they were unable to come due to a misprint. He continued, stating that he received a letter.

Chair Jacobs read the letter into the record:

To the Members of the City of Keene Agricultural Committee:
First off, let me introduce myself. I'm Susan Parke-Sutherland, a farmer and vendor at the Keene Farmers Market, and am one of three elected coordinators managing the Market for the 2015 season. I am relatively new to the Keene Farmers Market, as my business, Wingate Farm, started vending there in 2014.

One of the many issues on our plates this year has been the prospect of finding a permanent home for the Farmers Market at the future Ashuelot Greenspace Park. After reading the minutes from the July 9 meeting of the Agricultural Commission, I see that your group is also intrigued by this option. Myself, my co-coordinator Sarah Costa, and former coordinator Bill Fosher have all met with Gallagher Hannan at various times throughout the Winter of 2014 and Spring of 2015. We are eager to continue a dialogue with Ms. Hannan, and other invested parties, as this project matures.

Myself and my fellow coordinators would like the opportunity to attend the October meeting of the Agriculture Commission to discuss this topic, as well as others directly related to the Keene Farmers Market. If we, as members of the agricultural community of Keene, want to discuss the Ashuelot Greenspace project, it seems like a good idea to include someone who is informed as to the status/details of that endeavor. I have only met with Ms. Hannan, though it sounds like the Commission members have additional contacts.

We, the coordinators of the Keene Farmers Market, appreciate very much the invitation to attend the September 10 meeting of the Agricultural Commission. We believe that what is good for the Farmers Market is also good for the City of Keene, and vice versa. We look forward to having the opportunity to have an open discussion with you all.

Sincerely,
Susan Parke-Sutherland

Chair Jacobs stated that the Committee is still interested in the Green Space Project and the Farmer's Market.

Mr. Kenneth Stewart of 11 Algonquin Street in Keene, New Hampshire stated that he is happy to discuss the updates of the Greenspace Project again next month when others are present. He continued, stating that the Greenspace Project created an outline. Ms. Chalice asked if there is there is an online source for the Greenspace Project. Ms. Gallagher Hannan of 172 Middle Street in Lowell, Massachusetts stated that there will be an online source soon. Mr. Stewart stated that the project was envisioned as a flexible space for multiple usages. He continued, stating that the central idea was a play space using natural materials but due the

large lot, there was also an opportunity for other elements of the design. Mr. Stewart stated that one idea was a community event space and the other idea referred to natural rehabilitation. Mr. Stewart stated that remediation would occur and an introduction of pollinator species. He continued, stating that surface water runoff would be assessed and dealt with. Mr. Stewart stated that the space is close to downtown and the bike trail.

Mr. Stewart stated that a pavilion would be a community asset as well. He continued, stating that the community event space would be able to accommodate a Farmer's Market. Mr. Stewart stated that there are other possible events for the space and Parks and Recreation Director, Andy Bohannon has been part of the discussion. He continued, stating that the City staff suggested that the space would be rented often. Mr. Stewart stated that the connection with the Farmer's Market has not been finalized. He continued, stating that the discussion of the space being appropriate for the Farmer's Market is occurring.

Mr. Stewart stated that the plan has always been to have the city own the space. He continued, stating that the events and activities will be up to the city of Keene. Mr. Stewart stated that as people grow into the use of the park there may be further amenities that change over time. Mr. Stewart stated that it is important not to lock the space into one use and flexibility needs to occur. Mr. Stewart stated the Ashuelot Arboretum is a similar model where ownership was passed to the city over time. Mr. Stewart stated that he hopes to have a design; detail and development phase in the fall. He continued, stating that some designs were discussed in coordination with the farmers market. Mr. Stewart stated that the suggestions given by the city and the Parks and Recreation Department will be considered as well.

Mr. Stewart stated that the farmer's market suggested a covered pavilion area, room for twenty vendors, open green space, restrooms, a performance space with electricity and coverage, water, power and sewer, parking for patrons and vendors, and storage. Mr. Stewart stated that these will be usable for multiple uses. He continued, stating that fundraising need to happen next.

Ms. Wilton asked how this space will complement the central square. Mr. Stewart stated that it will complement it because it is another green space which is walkable. He continued, stating that the goal was to have a place that was different than Robin Hood Park and Wheelock Park which has traditional playgrounds. Mr. Stewart stated that they would be using natural materials to create play structures. Sarah stated that John Forgi of the Massachusetts Horticulture Society would be a great individual to research for design ideas. Ms. Hannan stated that because the future park is adjacent to Ashuelot River Park, it would be another gateway into the park.

Mr. Florenz asked if there is a timeline after fall developments. Mr. Stewart stated that this timeline is being worked on at the moment and more work must be done with the farmers market. He continued, stating that once the design development phase occurs, concepts are determined, and the fundraiser is decided, then the timeline can come together. Chair Jacobs stated that the farmers market has already put in an application for a 2016 location. Chair Jacobs stated that it would be great to have some concrete plans on this project by 2017. Ms.

Hannan stated that by 2017 an overall design should be determined. Ms. Chalice stated that a lot depends on funding. Mr. Florenz asked the Committee needs to do anything else to help the project. Mr. Stewart stated that the role the Committee has been very helpful thus far with facilitating the larger conversation. Ms. Welsh stated that the Committee envisioned the green space as a true destination that can be enjoyed and will be a nice addition to Keene.

Amanda Costello of Cheshire County Conservation stated that she is here to answer any additional questions and learn about the project. Mr. Florenz stated that the Committee reaching out to members in the farmer's market is a good way to manage the partnership and communicate properly. Ms. Chalice asked if another letter should be sent to all of the vendors of the farmers market. Chair Jacobs and Mr. Florenz replied, yes. Mr. Florenz stated that the letter should include the correct time and date as well.

Mr. Daloz asked if Committee members are talking with the farmer's market vendors as Committee representatives or just individuals. Chair Jacobs stated that official decisions cannot be made and perhaps it should be an official motion. Mr. Florenz stated that it is an open meeting and the Committee is just taking an extra step. Chair Jacobs stated that the farmer's market has a way of governing themselves and are committing to the October meeting. Ms. Welsh asked if there is still a problem communicating with the farmer's market, should the Committee open this opportunity to others that may not be part of the farmer's market. Mr. Florenz stated that this is a conversation for another time. Chair Jacobs stated that it is important to talk to the farmer's market when they are here and the Committee should give them the opportunity still. He continued, stating that it is important to discuss how to have better communication in the future. Mr. Florenz stated that a larger conversation should occur with the governance of the farmer's market. Chair Jacob stated that the Farmer's Market of Keene's website has guidelines available as well.

5. "A Consideration for the Keene Agricultural Council"

Mr. Daloz stated that he is very interested about public outreach pushing for more food production. He continued, asking if such communication and outreach can start with the Agricultural Committee. Chair Jacobs stated that this concept is appropriate for the Agricultural Committee and could be sent to the City Council but there is no official action needed. Mr. Daloz stated the idea came out of the Master Plan for Keene to be a healthy city.

Ms. Welsh stated that the Committee has been struggling to determine the mission. She continued, stating that Mr. Daloz's letter is a great start to look at the bigger picture. Mr. Florenz stated that the New England Food Solution's group is a great resource and suggested reaching out to them and possibly creating a partnership. Chair Jacobs stated that at the focus needs to be on farmers market during the next meeting and groups can come in after this. Ms. Chalice stated that she can reach out to similar organizations for a future meeting. Mr. Florenz suggested reaching out to Amanda Costello.

Ms. Wilton stated that in the summer, food is abundant but it is very expensive at the farmers market. She continued, stating it is a utilization and distribution problem. Ms. Duffy stated

that there is a program with Monadnock Menus that accepts EBT and veggie bucks. She continued, stating that section 8 housing now also has a buying group with over forty families. Ms. Duffy stated that food is expensive but there are groups working on it. Mr. Florenz stated that New England Food Solutions focuses on the bigger picture; not just production. Chair Jacobs stated that creating an organizational chart of the different groups.

Ms. Chalice stated that she will contact Ms. Costello and reach out to other groups. Chair Jacobs stated that it would be best to share Mr. Daloz's letter with Amanda Costello and discuss what the Committee's goals are for these partnerships. Ms. Welsh stated that the letter needs to be edited to not include specific goals which have not been discussed. Mr. Daloz stated that he will revise the letter and send it over to Ms. Chalice.

Mr. Florenz stated that the Monadnock Farm Coalition is also having a public policy forum at the end of the month on September 30th and as much representation from the Agricultural Committee would be great. He continued, stating that this will be at Stonewall Farms. Mr. Florenz mentioned that a potluck will also be occurring. Ms. Welsh stated that this event is on September 15th and asked Ms. Chalice to send this email over to Mr. Daloz. Ms. Welsh stated that she will send over the information on the public policy forum.

6. Possible Rescheduling of Regular Meeting Time to Third Thursday

Chair Jacobs stated that Kathy Harrington cannot attend the meetings at the current time but she is still interested in participating. He continued, stating that the second Thursday is no longer available and suggested the third Thursday of the month.

Mr. Daloz made a motion to change the Agricultural Committee meeting time to the third Thursday of the month at 3:30 PM. Ms. Welsh seconded the motion which carried unanimously.

7. New Business:

8. Next Meeting: Next meeting date: October 15 , 2015

9. More Time:

10. Adjournment

Meeting was adjourned at 4:28 PM

Respectfully submitted by:

Lana Bluege, Minute-taker

September 10, 2015