



David B. Cohen
Mayor

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NEWTON FARM COMMISSION

MINUTES

September 4, 2008

7:12 pm at City Hall

Rm 202

Meeting opened at 7:10 pm with the following attendees:

MEMBERS PRESENT: P. Lewenberg, Chair, J. Hepburn, R. Shoul, V. Schnell, L. Bruyn, C. Lappin, and Anne Phelps, staff.

MEMBERS ABSENT: J. Harper, L. Mottard

MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC: G. Rubin, NCF, T. Chapman, NCF, Peter Barrer

Newton Community Farm Inc. Report

Report on Crops

Peter Barrer reported – rough year because of weather. Farm stand \$150/day – much to restaurant (Farm Grill) buying local. Have been open to 7pm, now will be open till dark. Farmer’s Marker well – over expectation. We were selling out, but Greg says we want to “barely sell out.” CSA also doing well. Added fruit share option, though we have to buy fruit for now, until the fruit trees start to produce. Tomatoes had a lot of wilt from the moisture, so slightly short on some crops. Education: two tours for this weekend, one on Sat. (10:30-11:30) and one Sun. 11:00 to noon, open to everybody. Wed. next week – Sep. 10- is “Whole Foods Day” and they will donate 5% of their proceeds. Kiosk is 80 % built (looks like an arbor).

Update on Barn Work

Peter B. gave update on repair to barn and brought pictures. One standard stick-built wall next to timber frame is being restored. Foundation is being completed – repointed and rebuilt top foot or 2 of stone foundation and replaced sills. Timber framing work on-going. Cedar shingles will be going on soon. Still postponing the roof decision. Asphalt vs metal roof are the two alternatives.

Peter L. asked what isn’t going well. Peter B. said slower in raising money to finish work than expected. Peter L. asked if there are other things that need attention. There is a concern about how much being committed out of operating funds for work on the barn. The city required warranty from the contractor, which the NCF paid for, and the Community Farm is not raising money to cover that, since they believe it will not be

Newton Farm Commission

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necessary. Peter L. asking how well the farm doing in terms of leadership – as managers, how well are we doing. Peter B. said need to recruit new board members for NCF. Ted said farm manager has been relying on his wife’s insurance through her job, but as of November she will not be working and they will have no insurance. Salary is \$25000 plus housing. The Community Farm is looking for ways to provide health insurance per the state requirement. Discussion of various possible sources of insurance ensued. Also, Greg and family would like to keep their same physicians.

Vaunita noted farm is really beautiful and has really lots of volunteers – so much so there are no weeds! Peter L. said we’re submitting the financial report to the mayor and the Bd of Alderman. Will add cover letter (draft), that is being passed around for comment. Ted said Financial Report submitted to Comptroller. Ted said opinion letter submitted from auditor, but did not get distributed to all – he will make sure Anne has a copy to add to the report. Peter L. asked for estimate of level of volunteerism – Ted described some of the sources of volunteers. Jim said actual number of volunteers and volunteer hours very impressive. Ted will try to get Anne a “number” to add to the letter.

Gene reported on article that “sustainable” agriculture now the catchword, more than “organic.”

Peter B. reported on roof options – will depend on how much money is left will determine which option is used: shingles or metal. Asphalt shingles would be picked to match shingles on roof of house. For metal, Peter B. picked a color, but Don preferred clear (silver). Could be a \$1,000 difference in different materials. Peter B. The Historic Commission prefers a metal roof instead of asphalt. The roof has asphalt shingles. Also trying to decide whether to rebuild shed. Vaunita noted the metal roofs last a long time, and she prefers traditional tin to a color. Gene said snow slides off metal roofs more easily. Following discussion, the consensus of the NFC was to allow Community Farm to go ahead with asphalt, if that is all they can afford. Preference for metal roof (if finances permit), but not requirement– and prefer more natural looking metal. Cheryl surprised the Historic Commission would prefer metal roof, when the barn actually had shingles. Following more discussion, group fine with asphalt but also happy with metal.

General Business & Announcements

Approval of August 7, 08 Minutes – Louise moved, Vaunita seconded motion to approve minutes, as amended. Vote: All approved.

Board Membership & Reappointments

Have 3 members whose terms will expire. Peter L. and Cheryl do not want to be re-appointed. Vaunita has been re-appointed. Alderman Baker intends to nominate a replacement for Cheryl (her brother). Peter L. says rules stipulate that after 3 consecutive 1-yr terms, officers should be replaced. So, at November meeting need to elect new officers. Peter L. said he is not eager to leave but has other interests he would like to pursue. Jon Regosin was suggested, and may be interested in the near future. Dwayne Hillis, who lives in a nearby farmhouse, may also be interested. Vaunita expressed appreciation for the way Peter L. has run the meetings. Peter L. said he thinks it is good for the organization to not have the same people linger in office for a long time. Louise said she thinks Peter brings out the best from people. Peter said he is really gratified at how much has been done to date.

Officer Elections: Should take place at the Nov. meeting.

Miscellaneous

Ted noted this also the year the license agreement (contract between NFC and NCF) comes up for renewal. Jim asked what changes are being proposed. Ted said the main change is to have a much longer contract. The longer commitment will make it easier for fund-raising and planning.

Peter asked for review of the process for extension and renegotiation of the contract at the next meeting. P. Lewenberg asked Anne to ask Ouida to the next meeting to review the process.

Announcements: Louise advertising homes on tour as Green Decade fund-raiser. Organic gardening tour is 14 September. Vaunita will be attending the Farm Aid concert at the Tweeter Center (formerly Great Woods) on Sep. 20th, which was started by several country and western singers for proceeds to go to little farms (although the headquarters is in Somerville).

Respectfully submitted,

Anne Phelps, Sr. Environmental Planner

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