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NEWTON FARM COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES November 1, 2007

Meeting opened at 7:05 pm with the following attendees:

MEMBERS PRESENT: P. Lewenberg, Chair, C. Lappin, J. Harper, J. Hepburn, R. Shoul, D. Lang, and staff, Anne Phelps; V. Schnell arrived later.

MEMBERS ABSENT: L. Bruyn

MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC: Gene Rubin, NCF and Rebekah Smillie, NCF

Newton Community Farm – update on current activities

Update- R. Smillie reported the last of the tomatoes are down, the cover crops are in, garlic is planted, and Greg Maslowe is planning to replace the fruit trees that died. Greg is about to start winter chores, including cleaning the barn and tool maintenance. The drainage work around the barn has been completed. The kids from Learning Prep finished. Greg repaired the brakes on the truck and got the steering fixed. He is thinking about keeping the truck for a while. He did contact ‘Old Time Garage’ and Ted Chapman followed up to see whether the proprietor could find a flatbed truck for the farm that is affordable. Repair work on the tractor has been approved.

Report on Fall Festival - R. Smillie reported that about 300 adults, many accompanied by children, attended the festival, and the farm made about \$3000 in profit from the event. The food table did well, the event covered costs on crafts, and the silent auction was very successful. Julia Priest from “Music Together” performed. A goal for next year is to have a program ready ahead of time so it can be published. It was confusing to some people to have the Fall Festival of the Farm on the same day as the Harvest Festival. It would probably be better to have them on different days/week-ends. Peter Lewenberg heard from people that there is interest in getting shares next year. However, because of the trade-off between the number of shares and the farm commitment to providing food to local stores, 65 shares is about the optimum number. Greg does donate 6 shares to the Food Pantry. People without shares can still come at the same time as those with shares to buy from the farm stand, and attend classes – they just do not get in as involved in working on the farm. On a separate topic, Rona Shoul remembered Greg speaking to the Conservation Commission about the farm, and that his talk was [video] taped. She said the Farm should get a copy of the taped talk. Further talk about cleaning out the barn raised the issue of what items might be thrown out versus what items should not. Vaunita Schnell did an appraisal some time ago and there are things that should be sold, since they are too valuable to just throw out or give away.

Report on barn repair / renovation -Gene Rubin reported that there was a meeting Tuesday on the siding and work on the roof. Rebekah said there is still discussion during Newton Community Farm meetings about how the barn will be used, and how much that use will inform the present design decision about repair to the exterior. The contractor who bid on the exterior work wants a structural evaluation before bidding on any of the interior work. Peter Barrer has been advising the discussion to make sure the proposed interior use is consistent with the plans for outdoor repair. Don Lang noted that it is premature to get bids on interior work, since it would need permission from the city for a change in use from an accessory [farm] structure to a new use. He noted that the original donation from the Lacy(s) was to restore the historic look and use of the barn. Before any change in use, an analysis with respect to the building code would be needed. Peter said that the Newton Farm Commission needs to review any decision regarding work on the barn before getting bids and going forward.

Discussion of Names: Members reviewed the use of the names for the farm, including the incorporation of “Angino” in the name. The Newton Farm Commission oversees the Newton Community Farm, which latter oversees the daily operation of the farm. The enabling ordinance identifies the farm as the “Newton Angino Community Farm,” and the Commission members asked whether the Ordinance needs to be changed in order to use “Newton Community Farm” to identify the farm in the future. Staff will look into this.

General Business & Announcements

AgCom Workshop Dec 8th -Judy Hepburn and Louise Bruyn have expressed interest in attending an Agricultural Commission workshop to be held Dec. 8th (2007 Agricultural Commission Workshop & Resource Seminar at the Best Western in Marlborough). Cheryl Lekstrom, one of the organizers, and the contact person for the workshop said the workshop is for, “established Agricultural Commission members, steering and ad-hoc committee members who already understand the concept of Agricultural Commissions.” Since the workshop is after the December meeting, members hope Judy and/or Louise will be able to report on the workshop at the January meeting.

Re-appointment of J. Harper, L. Bruyn, & CC delegate J. Hepburn – re-appointments of all three members were confirmed by the Board of Aldermen and the appointments become official on 11-5-2007. Conservation has also re-appointed J. Hepburn as their representative to the Farm Commission.

Elections (see Article V) - A motion was made by D. Lang to re-elect presiding officers (Peter Lewenberg, Chair; Jim Harper, Vice-Chair) if they are willing to continue in their positions. Members so noted indicated they were willing to be re-appointed. Motion seconded by V. Schnell. Vote: All in favor. Motion passed.

Signage - update on signs & crosswalk - Anne reported that Greg’s request for street signs to give drivers notice of the Farm’s presence, and the request for a crosswalk for people coming to the farm stand are on the docket for Traffic Council, and should come up on the hearing schedule in January or February.

Minutes of October 4th Meeting – Minor changes were noted. **Motion by V. Schnell to approve minutes for October 4th as amended. Second by C. Lappin(?) Vote: 4 approved and 3 abstentions: V. Schnell, D. Lang, and C. Lappin abstained. Motion passed.**

Miscellaneous

Discussion returned to the Festival, and ways to get more attention for the Farm. Vaunita asked Becka to send a thank you to the organizer of the Harvest Festival. There was a suggestion that the Farm should do a Spring Festival, too, and a mention that some CSAs offer winter shares. Anne reported that Clint Shukel, the Traffic Engineer, had ordered signs made for the farm with the farm “rules and regulations,” as approved by the Farm Commission. The signs were delivered and Greg wants to post one on the barn and one on the kiosk when it is erected. There is a typo on the signs that reads “New England” instead of “Newton” Farm Commission. The members agreed that, in future, we could get the rules and regulations printed on paper and laminated.

September CC Meeting - V. Schnell noted that the September minutes are incorrect, in that she was present for the meeting but is shown as ‘absent.’

D. Lang asked whether Mrs. Lacey is becoming impatient at the delay in the repair work on the barn. Gene Rubin said the drainage work has been done – although it is not obvious to an observer. Gene asked for a written report from the Community Farm to pass to Mrs. Lacey. He said the Lacey(s) believed the farm group would do the work on the exterior this year. V. Schnell said the Newton Farm Commission has also recommended the outside work get done. She suggested someone from the Newton Farm Commission (other than Gene) should attend the next meeting of the Newton Community Farm. Becka said that understanding how the interior is to be used needs to be figured out first. Gene got bids on the outside repair work, but the Farm Community did not want to start the work until there was more consensus on how the interior of the building would be used. Peter Barrer is trying to integrate the ideas and advise on how some interior uses might affect what would need to be done regarding the outside repair. Vaunita said we can not change the outside of the barn. Becka said what is done or not done on the outside will have impacts on things like insulation. Don said if we move too far from the original scope of work the city will not be comfortable. Peter requested Becka and Gene relay to the rest of the Newton Community Farm that the Newton Farm Commission has asked for a plan for the barn. Vaunita said the Commission had approved 1) the exterior of the barn as a first step, 2) had no funding to do more, and 3) the exterior provides a demonstration of improvement. Peter advised the Community Farm to keep it simple and act on it.

S. Lappin moved to adjourn. Second by R. Shoul. Vote: all in favor. Motion passed at 9:05pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Anne Phelps, Sr. Environmental Planner

Newton Farm Commission

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