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NEWTON FARM COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES

May 7, 2009

7:00 pm at City Hall

Rm 209

Meeting opened at 7:00 p.m. with the following attendees:

MEMBERS PRESENT: J. Harper, Chair, P. Lewenberg, L. Mottard, J. Hepburn, L. Bruyn, V. Schnell

MEMBERS ABSENT: R. Shoul, D. Lang, R. Lipof

MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC: Gene Rubin, representative NCF, Peter Barrer, representative, NCF

Staff Anne Phelps introduced Alexandra Ananth as a Sr. Planner in the Planning and Development Department who will be getting involved with the Commission as backup for Anne and as potential new staff to the Commission. Alexandra expressed her interest in the Commission and Anne mentioned that she is growing her first vegetable garden in her Newton Centre yard with her children.

Newton Community Farm Inc. Report

Report on Farm Operation/Barn update – Peter Barrer reported that the planned expansion (doubling in length) of the greenhouse is complete and is back in use with 1,500 seedlings planted in anticipation of next weeks Annual Seedling Sale. The sale is a fundraiser and will take place on Sunday May 17th from noon to 4PM with a Member Hour from 11AM to noon. Seedlings will be sold for \$1 and they are hoping to sell out. P. Barrer mentioned a recent trip to the very successful Seattle Tilth Seedling Sale where they raise approximately \$200K through sales and donations to the Tilth. Asked for contact info for Kathleen Cahill regarding potential funds for handicap accessible raised beds. The Farm will be gardening some of the community garden plots in Nahanton Park as part of a collaborative with school age children. The Farm is offering educational classes and they are interviewing applicants for the Education Coordinator position. The barn door is in transit and should be installed in time for the seedling sale. L. Bruyn asked about title decision of farm “member” versus “supporter” and suggested supporter was more inclusive sounding and more clearly denoted financial contributor. J. Hepburn asked that the farm needs be posted for the Seedling Sale.

General Business & Announcements

Contract with Newton Community Farm (and see minutes for March, April 2009)

Anne Phelps reported that she has been working with Ouida Young of the Law Department on other Farm

Newton Farm Commission

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related business (potential CPA application discussed below) and that O. Young had not been able to finish the extended contract but hoped to get to it next week. The proposal is for a 20 yr. Contract with 5 yr. Check-ins in order to communicate structural stability to potential donors. The Commission expressed strong interest in having a completed contract for the June meeting.

Discussion of "Vision"

V. Schnell stated that she had requested to talk about visioning at tonight's meeting as the Commission hasn't had much time to talk about the topic since the Commission's beginning and the beginning of the Farm. She said her vision for the farm is threefold and included returning Angino farm to a working farm which grew produce; to preserve the history of farming and the historic nature of the Angino farm in particular; and the farm as a laboratory for educational purposes. P. Lewenberg stated that he was not sure the historic piece was part of the original vision for the Farm. The Chair said that is was not a key piece of the Ordinance in that the Ordinance is broader. An idea was raised that how farming has evolved could be an interesting class to offer in the future. L. Mottard expressed an interest in Greg being a part of any visioning discussion as he offers practical experience to the conversation. P. Lewenberg said he felt the vision could be an evolving or living enterprise. L. Bruyn thought the possibility of making a film could be an exciting way to teach about farming if they could interest a filmmaker to put together an application to get funding for a documentary. P. Barrer mentioned Lucy Caldwell Stair would be leading a historical tour of the Farm in June. The possibility of the creation of a local 4H group was raised. It was noted that the educational component helps the Farm reach a larger community than just the CSA members. The question of what the vision is for future growth of the Farm was also raised. V. Schnell stated that she believes the Commission should review the mission and vision on an annual basis for oversight and guidance to the Farm on behalf of the City. J. Hepburn stated that she believes there should be more long term planning and communication between the Farm and the Commission so that the Commission is aware of what projects are in the pipeline and what their timeline is.

Accessibility of classes

P. Barrer will be meeting with the Mayor's Commission on Disabilities on Monday May 18th at 8PM to discuss accessibility issues. Members welcome to attend.

CPA funding for Phase II Barn Renovation (interior)

P. Barrer stated that the barn needs about \$400K for the interior renovation. He has been speaking with Alice Ingerson who is encouraging of the project as potentially CPA eligible. They have discussed that it would be appropriate for the Commission to play a role as the applicant and advocate as the City's agent and the Farm operator would execute the project. The Farm is working with O. Young and Nick Parnell of Public Buildings to see if they can agree on a process whereby the Farm Operator can pay for the architectural design of the project with private funds they could raise but use CPA funds to pay for the renovation. P. Barrer to email around interior plans again. Commission requested a timeline for the CPA application. P. Lewenberg made a motion to support CPA funding for Phase II of the barn restoration and to work with the Farm to execute the project in its historical renovation. The motion was seconded and the Commission voted unanimously in favor of the motion.

April Minutes Approval

There was a motion by P. Lewenberg to approve the minutes from the April meeting that was seconded by V. Schnell. L. Mottard and J. Hepburn abstained but the motion passed.

Anne Phelps brought up that she had heard that Lucy Caldwell Stair was potentially interested in joining the Commission and Anne requested permission from the Commission to reach out to her to see if this was true and how her background may fit into the Commission's makeup as a number of Commission member have expressed interest in resigning or not being re-appointed for additional terms. The idea was raised to wait for the new Mayor to appoint new members but the consensus was that it might not be an immediate

priority for the new administration and that the Commission could benefit from finding new members sooner rather than later. L. Bruyn stated she would see if anyone from Green Decade might be interested in filling her position. Anne recommended that in general Commission members should quietly be responsible for finding a suitable replacement for themselves and bring any names forward to her and the Commission.

V. Schnell made a motion to adjourn, which was seconded by J. Hepburn. The meeting was adjourned at 9:10.

After the meeting L. Bruyn reminded members about a new CSA for fish.

Respectfully submitted,

Anne Phelps, Sr. Environmental Planner

