

**Pomfret Agricultural Commission Thursday, Nov. 19, 2015 Pomfret Senior Center**

Meeting Time 7:00 pm

In Attendance

James Rowley Chairman

Adam Squire Secretary

Ellsworth Chase

John Wolchesky

Bill Wood

Citizens in Attendance

First Selectman Craig Baldwin

Lance Sistare

I. Regular Meeting

A. Open Regular Meeting/Roll Call

B. Approval of Minutes of Oct 15 2015

Minutes were submitted and approved

C. Citizen Participation and Conversation

Lance Sistare introduced himself to the group and described his interest in the meeting and his farming activities

II. Current Business

A. Pomfret Farmers Market 2016 proposed dates(July 22,29 Aug. 12,19) Town calendar Date approval

James Rowley volunteered to check with the town to see if the rec center was available for the tentative dates selected for next years Pomfret Farmers Market. First Selectman Craig Baldwin joined the conversation asking the farmers present that participated at last years market if the market was a success from their perspective as a vendor. Mr. Baldwin then followed up by asking what the ultimate direction of this market venture was. Is the vision of the Commission to have a weekly market in Pomfret? The commission responded by citing last seasons market as a beta test that was well received and that the commission's next step is to offer more dates for the market next season to continue to test the viability. This spawned a conversation driven by First Selectman Baldwin about other ways to promote agriculture within Pomfret. Mr. Baldwin offered a vision of town where the connection to its producers is so strong that the populace is committed to sourcing most of their food from local farms. The commission shared Mr. Baldwins enthusiasm for such a vision as it would benefit many of the producers/members of the commission to foster such a culture of supporting local ag in the community. Mr. Baldwin then mentioned opportunities to meet other needs of local producers. One idea was to utilize grant money to revitalize the old Steakums facility and recreate it as a co-working space for local farmers with a possible retail platform as well. Possible needs cited included a commercial kitchen for value added production, and a possible slaughtering and processing facility for local livestock producers. There was a good discussion by all surrounding the viability of the idea and whether Pomfret Agriculture in its current manifestation could sustain such a facility.

B. PomfretGrownBrochure(PCS printer update)

Ellsworth Chase offered an update on his exploration of printing options for the group to consider. While using the PCS printer might offer a more cost sensitive option for printing the brochure that would also allow smaller runs and better ease of revision the quality would not be as good as a professional printer that could also help with layout. First Selectman Baldwin

suggested looking into Vista print as a potential cost sensitive option relative to a local professional printer. Adam Squire referenced the town of Hampton's list of producers hosted on the towns website and suggested that it could be a good intermediate step to refine the content of the new brochure while we continued to explore a new printing.

#### C. Plan of Conservation and Development

This was revisited and there was no immediate update since the Commission's plan was submitted by Ellsworth Chase to the Planning and Zoning Commission. This created some conversation around the Farm Building Tax Exemption tendered in the plan. Clarity was achieved that even if the Planning and Zoning Commission accepts the tax exemption recommendation Planning and Zoning will not take ownership of making that recommendation a reality within the tax code of the town. This opened a larger discussion with Mr. Baldwin and the Commission surrounding the tax exemption. Bonnie Duncan who had been invited to the meeting to help further the conversation with information from her end was not present. Bonnie had offered to attend a future meeting. Mr. Baldwin explained that Bonnie did not have all the information she hoped to bring to the conversation as a result of where the town was in their tax planning process. Without all the information her ability to speak to certain questions of the commission was very limited. The group is hoping to achieve some understanding of the potential financial impact to the town if a tax exemption for farm buildings is codified in the tax structure of the town. John Wolchesky tendered some concerns about our ability to define the potential impact if we did not have the ability to determine how many farms/farmers would be eligible to seek the exemption.

#### III. New Business

##### A. Upcoming Workshops(Canning & Preserves) Spring Meeting

This item was briefly visited and planning for future workshops was tabled for this meeting until we get closer to the spring

##### B. Education and Outreach(Pomfret Community School)

This item continues to be of interest to the Commission pending further exploration

##### C. Tax Exemption on Farm Building Discussion with Bonnie Duncan(Postponed until next month)

Even though this item was postponed there was discussion surrounding the exemption as cited above

#### IV. Other Business

##### A. Future Agenda Items(Ag night open house, The history of farms in Pomfret)

These future agenda items are of interest to the commission

##### B. Meeting Date Dec 17th

The meeting date was accepted by the group and it was decided that we would have a December meeting

#### V. Citizens Comments

Both First Selectman Baldwin and Lance Sistare contributed throughout the meeting

Chairman James Rowley offered an update on Commission Member Bradley Beeler. The Chairman had received an email from Brad detailing some recent health challenges which explained his inability to attend recent meetings. In the correspondence Brad indicated that if his absence was a hindrance to the group he would respect the Chairman's decision to replace his position as a full member. The Chairman committed to holding Brad's position until the time that

he could rejoin the commission as his membership and perspective is very valuable to the group.

VI. Adjournment

The meeting Adjourned at 8:34

Meeting Minutes Accepted Dec. 17, 2015

Respectfully Submitted



Adam Roy Squire

Secretary Pomfret Agricultural Commission