

Town of Thompson
Agriculture Commission

815 Riverside Drive

North Grosvenordale, CT 06255

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February 21, 2024

Seney Room – Town Hall

Agriculture Commission

In Attendance – Vern Butler, Valerie Clark, Kies Orr-LaVack, Earl Norman, Ryan Cournoyer

Meeting called to order at 7:04pm

Tyra Penn-Gesek joined at approximately 7:25pm

Minutes -

5/29/2024 is the correct next meeting.

Vern Butler moved to accept with the date correction, Kies Orr-LaVack 2nd. All in favor

Correspondence – Nothing other than those all commissioners received from Tyra via email forwarding information about other Ag events/programs.

Ray Williams applied as alternate for the Agriculture Commission.

Ag awareness and Grant – brainstorming: we need to talk about format, what do we want to represent agriculture in town? Trifold or other type of handout or media? Why do on paper? Who are you trying to reach? Paper can be hung on a bulletin board. Should we try to appeal to younger, older, both – tourists, those who live here – all are possible that need to be more aware of agriculture in town.

Vern can create Instagram/Facebook page but needs a lot of help with admin. Vern and Kies will team up to create a Facebook page for the Ag commission. “Thompson Agriculture Commission”

Can rotate “our farms” and share events, post links.

Can cross post with Instagram, use lots of photos.

Vern will reach out to the Town Hall to see if there’s a conflict. Tyra says Town recommendation is to keep fewer independent Facebook sites, but others have their own if very active like Trails Committee.

Election of Officers -

Valerie Clark motioned to appoint Vern Butler as Chair, Kies Orr-LaVack 2nd - all in favor.

Valerie Clark nominated Randy Blackmer as Vice Chair, Vern Butler 2nd - all in favor.

Vern Butler motioned to appoint Valerie Clark as Secretary, Kies Orr-LaVack 2nd – all in favor.

Open positions –

Vern Butler made a motion to move Ryan Cournoyer to full commission member, Valerie Clark 2nd. All in favor.

Commission discussed recommending Ray Williams for the open Alternate position to the Board of Selectmen. Vern Butler made this as a motion, Kies 2nd - all in favor. Vern will contact the Board of Selectmen tomorrow to make the recommendation.

Website not appearing to Valerie with the correct list of Ag members, Vern has changed several times, should be right now. Tyra says old links can show up old information.

Community Day - Date may be set – but it is likely 10/5. Similar siting for Ag as two years ago. Ag Commission will do the Hay maze so long as hay is available. Vern or Randy or if Jonathan Eddy has hay on a wagon. Vern staffs the maze. Pop-up and signs (Kies has our sign and has collateral). Vern will find a pop up.

Animal Control as it pertains to Livestock – example scenario – loose livestock and they call Ag Commission, we are only an advisory committee. Only ACO has the enforcement authority. State Police can assist. Can, as Ag commission, make a volunteer list to reference similar to what CT Horse Council put together with the State Vet. Can create a list as long as it is clear it is not the town’s function. Can also have volunteer list for farm structures like help with fencing and barns.

Item can possibly go on Facebook as a grassroots effort of “farmers helping farmers”. Facebook Messenger could be used to blast information to all at once.

No further action at this time, but keep it in mind for future.

Agricultural Technology -

Cameras, digesters, robot barns – how much do we use technology. Water heater auto shut offs. Watering. Motion detector lights. WiFi networks need to be robust. Do we do a Farm Technology day or presentation? CTRCD Amanda Johnson is a super contact for farm efficiency and diversification.

Equipment Hubs – they exist now and RCD looking at what the shape of it will look like going forward.

Vern will contact Amanda.

Announcements

Next permaculture workshop is next Wednesday, 2/28/2024, in person there'll be pizza, zoom meeting option as well.

Citizens Comments

No Citizens present.

Agenda for next meeting

Add Woodstock Agritourism collaboration possibility if Randy has something, Vern will call him to find out.

Vern Butler motions to adjourn. Kies Orr-LaVack 2nd.