Falmouth Agricultural Commission
Small Conference Room on February 25, 2019 at 6:30pm

Present:
Karen Schwalbe, Chair
Amy Vickers, absent
Matt Churchill, absent
Jane Vose, Vice Chair
Warren Collins, absent
Heidi Walz
April Merriam, Recording Secretary

NO QUORUM but necessary meeting for projects in March and April.

Chair Schwalbe called the meeting to order at 6:30pm. Stan Ingram of Farming Falmouth was present along with Eliana Spitzer of the Falmouth Enterprise. Tony Guerra-Neto, a micrograins farmer who moved to Falmouth a year ago from Brazil was present.

Agenda:
Old Business
Community Gardens and Falmouth Farming (FF): Water: Stan Ingram of FF reported that Dick Pooley of the FF working group talked with the Falmouth Water Department. They will tap into 2 Town hydrants installed years ago on a parcel that 300 Committee owned. The Water Dept will tap into the water line and there will be two lawn hydrants for the CG. FF will pay for the installation and equipment with meters. So one hydrant will be used for CG and the other for the field that FF may or may not use this year and both groups can water at the same time as needed.

FF Meeting Thursday, February 21st: Discussion topics: Rules and regulations, application format, release forms. Basic gardening layout and design for the CG was made with 3 different sized plots and plots for physically challenged gardeners. Plan is to possibly remove the Gifford Street raised beds and relocate to Andrews Farms or get funding to build new raised beds or use a combo of old and new.

300 Committee/Jessica Whitenour discussions: Reviewed overlapping parking issues at the CG.
CG in each Falmouth village: Debbie Rogers’ GIS maps will be useful. The 300 Committee was asked to watch for “village” area parcels when they become available as possible CG sites in a Falmouth village.

Grant writing: FF working group members are looking to write up 3-4 local grants with a couple to St. Barnabus Episcopal Church for their outreach programs and several others for items such as irrigation, land preparation, moving sheds/tools funding.

Spring cranberry bog maintenance and harvest:
Flax 3: Bog maintenance was not done on February 17th as proposed at the January meeting. The bog is still soggy but brush could be pulled to the bog edges and the DPW may be able to help us since it is Town property. No burning since there is no running water. ConCom will need to be notified with an email when work is scheduled. Stan will try to work on Friday and Karen will notify ConCom.
Mr. Guerra-Neto asked if there were any organic cranberry bogs: In Waquoit, the Collins Bog which is not a Town bog is organic and can be seen behind Waquoit Feed and Grain building on Rt. 28. AgComm member Matt Churchill knows the owner of Collins Bog.

Spring Farmer Meet and Greet Update: Heidi wrote a letter and Chair Schwalbe read it to the board tonight regarding having local farmers introduce their farms to the Falmouth community on May 18th. Any farmer interested in this event should contact the AgComm.
With no January or February quorum, the motion for this letter will be made during the March meeting. Chair Schwalbe will see if the board can meet at Pariah Farm/Matt Churchill’s Farm to vote on this letter. The public meeting notice needs to be made by Wednesday this week for a meeting on the weekend.

Other Old Business

New Business
Community Harvest of West Thomson Bog: Stan Ingram stated that West Thomson bog has berries. Chair Schwalbe will contact ConCom about how to have the public pick the berries in the fall and questioned Town liability issue about public berry picking. Stan questioned whether FF will need liability insurance for the CG but since it is Town land, Town liability insurance should cover it per Chair Schwalbe and will investigate. West Thomson is Town land.

Farming Falmouth:
FF and 300 Committee: Stan stated that Andrews Farm is supposed to have a Farm Plan and Ms. Whritenour will contact ConCom about this. Chair Schwalbe stated there has to be a Farm Plan, not an annual one but one that can be updated. There is also a mandated annual walk-through of Andrews Farm to monitor the Agriculture Restriction. Chair Schwalbe will notify ConCom as a reminder for the annual walk-through and offer recommendations.

AmeriCorps: Ms. Whritenour advised using AmeriCorps since it is easier to work with and if FF put in a proposal, maybe FF, AgComm and FM could share some of the workers. They work 3 days a week.

TerraCorps requires providing 32 hours of work/week, no stipend, no housing but a $8250-10,000 sliding scale administration fee and $1500 or more for service related travel. DPW may be submitting a proposal for AmeriCorps this year.

Mr. Tony Guerra-Neto, new farmer in Falmouth, has been in Falmouth for a year. His interest is in micro-grains, sprouts and mushrooms. He has questions about licenses and permits and the selling of his produce. Chair Schwalbe stated that there are federal regulations from the Food Security Modernization Act and probably not applicable to you for small scale selling. The markets you will probably be selling to are Windfall Market, Stop and Shop but these places may require you to have the federal regulations. You will need liability insurance and understanding of good handling practices and procedures. The State holds regular workshops and trainings implemented by MDAR on topics like wash stations, harvesting, handling boxes etc with a cost of $40 per training. Chair Schwalbe will lend Mr. Guerra-Neto her MDAR book.

Mr. Guerra-Neto goes to Chelsea, buys produce and sells on the Cape. It is legally different to buy produce wholesale and then sell to the public as opposed to growing it yourself since you have more protection in growing it yourself and selling. When you are a middle man, it is a commercial transaction with higher requirements, so be careful. With micro-grains, sprouts and mushrooms there is a high level of contamination due to the moist environment.

Chair Schwalbe suggested going to Farm Credit, Mark Silvia, a farm insurance agent in Osterville because Mr. Silvia understands farm-related issues. Call Quonset Nursery who sells sprouts for Sid Weiner, Jonathan Sprouts, and Two Friends Farm in Attleboro. The board advised using only oak logs for mushrooms. Chair Schwalbe will send him links for the MDAR training and he will provide his email address. Rain water collection is not clean enough due to possible bacteria.

Ann Sears, FF member: The Emerald House property, Poor House and Andrews Farm old farmhouse are on the BOS agenda tonight. Town managers want to unload the old farmhouse on Andrews Farms since this land is not part of the AR.
So if new buildings or storage sheds need to be built, this location is needed. One FF vision is to bring the farmhouse up to code, make an upstairs dormitory for farm workers and downstairs a non-profit office with a commercial kitchen. This BOS discussion is scheduled for 8:15pm tonight. Emerald House may have a large playground and others would like to keep the Emerald House property for what it was initially secured for. Support from AgComm tonight would be helpful in the board members learning what is being discussed. Then this board could write a support letter to the BOS.

Next Meeting: Monday, March 25, 2019
Chair Schwalbe adjourned the meeting at 7:25pm.

Please note: Agenda items may be taken out of order, per affirmative vote by the board.

Board will consider any matters not reasonably anticipated by the Chair.