

BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

FINAL MEETING MINUTES

May 11, 2020

Supervisors: David Williams, Kathie Becker (intermittent connectivity early in the meeting – joined at 6:54), Patrick Hearn (joined at 6:50 P.M.; had intermittent connectivity issues), Andrew Mintz, Elizabeth Austin, Associate Supervisor (had difficulty connecting initially; joined at 6:53)

Contractors: Susan Thomas, Frances Gillespie (present for her report)

Guests: Heidi Ramsey NRCS (present for report), Jack Loomis, NRCS (present for NRCS report) Liz McGuire, Past District Administrator

Quorum: Chairman David Williams confirmed there was a quorum and opened the meeting at 6:47 p.m.

Minutes: April 11th meeting minutes were approved as released with the agenda after Patrick made some name corrections. Andrew made the motion, David seconded and all were in favor.

NACD Technical Assistance Grant: Taken out of order while waiting for Heidi to connect. Andrew outlined his vision of replicating programs he heard about at the Annual Meeting where Districts are providing conservation education curricula to public elementary schools. He hoped the grant would provide MCD with the funds and staff necessary to bring programming into schools in the county, since youth education is key to changing the world. Sue expressed concern with the tight timeline and the possible mismatch between this grant and these goals, since this grant seems to relate to hiring a Conservation Planner that would work closely with NRCS starting in July of 2020. Heidi reported that WCCD has applied for this grant to support a planner already in place in the Worcester office and that the application requires forecasting how many projects would be performed for NRCS/WCCD under this grant. Liz M stated that an application of this sort takes many months to plan. Andrew clarified that he had made the suggestion that we look at this grant thinking that an NACD grant would support any sort of NACD programming he had heard about and requested that if this grant is not appropriate that we continue to seek funding elsewhere. There seemed to be consensus that this is a good goal for the District. **Sue committed to confirming her understanding about this particular grant and pursuing it if the project qualifies. Sue, Pat and Andy all agreed to check with their local school districts to see what is being done, and what might be welcomed.** Massachusetts, to our knowledge, does not have a standard conservation strand in the science curriculum for all grades k-12. Sue believes Westford has eliminated it's award winning k-6 Living Lab science

enrichment programming due to budget constraints. **Liz M. will email her Envirothon contacts to Andrew. Jane Obaggy may have insights into additional funding.**

7:20 District Conservatoinist Report: Heidi reported that work is moving through the pipeline in both offices and they continue to be very busy with the cut off for round three of funding on Friday. The Commonwealth has already selected the proposals for half of the funding. There was a big pool from last year. They expect another big lot of contracts to come in. Dan continues to staff the Westford office under the closure orders.

Pat asked if Heidi had an update on how the current economic situation might impact budgets. Heidi answered “not at all” and reported that this issue was on everyone’s minds and they were in regular touch all the way up the chain of command to DC, but have not heard anything. They are hopeful that the agency has received funding under the relief package, but that is still not clear.

Sue announced that she had asked that Heidi present some case studies of their work in Middlesex County in her report to the Board going forward. Heidi then introduced Jack Loomis, a relatively new to us Conservation Planner funded by American Farmland Trust, who spoke about his recent project with Ashby Pasture. Jack conducted a site visit and provided technical expertise and funding for a high tunnel (there is a lot of demand for these to extend the short growing season for mixed vegetables in Massachusetts) and discussed some restoration issues with the forested part of the property. The new owners purchased the property about 2 years ago. This client had all the success factors for a high tunnel: a water source, electricity, healthy soil and a good slope profile. Jack advised them about the size and siting of the tunnel, ensuring it didn’t disturb any natural or cultural resources, provided a list of approved vendors for the purchase to be funded under the program, and submitted a site plan and report for approval and funding. While walking the property Jack and the owners discussed eliminating the invasive plants present on their forested portion of the property. That project will hopefully be part of a longer term plan and relationship to be addressed in the future.

Pat asked about a Conservation Plan and composting. Jack responded that Conservation Commissions often ask for conservation plans and that working with NRCS generally makes Conservations Commissions more comfortable that landowners are having a positive impact on their properties. They view working with NRCS as a positive when approving plans.

David asked about Hillside, a farmer he knows and thinks we should/might already work with. Jack confirmed that Bob Purcell is working with them on a high tunnel and possibly forestry management and irrigation as well.

David also asked Heidi for a drilling update on the work on Tyler Dam. Heidi said that Jim Lyons was involved in this project and that she had not seen any results so far. She volunteered to

invite him to the June meeting. David was interested in a plan to portage kayaks around the dam as well.

7:46 pm Plant Sale Coordinator's Report: Spring Sale: Frances reported that the tent was up and the building inspector approved it this morning. Deliveries have been fine so far and Keith Bohne and his wife have been great to work with, have allowed us to use the property for free and have even offered use of the bathroom in their attached apartment to the sale volunteers. The only problem Frances had was her car broke down at the farm, but she has already had it fixed.

David confirmed the address: 31 Tadmuck Road.

Kathie commented that Frances was a superstar and we all expressed our thanks. Kathie also asked how many orders we had and Frances confirmed 287, up from last year.

Liz suggested Frances let the police know about our sale being at this new location so if there are any traffic issues or other curious concerned folks inquiring, they can respond appropriately.

David asked what MCD was doing for the Bohne family to express our thanks. The Board voted to approve a \$250 gift certificate to Gibbett Hill Grill. Liz A made the motion, Andrew approved as did Patrick and all were in favor.

Frances reported that she tracked down each of our customers and informed them of the new dates via email, phone or letter, and once our new site was confirmed, drafted a letter with the order number, new dates, times, place, pick up process and maps which she mailed to everyone rather than the usual reminder postcard which would have been too small for all of the necessary information this time.

David asked if Frances had heard from his friend Isabella who had expressed an interest in volunteering. She had not, so David will plan to ask her to the Annual Meeting.

Frances expects one delivery Tuesday and two on Wednesday in addition to the rain barrels.

David reported that a woman was very obviously admiring the beautiful purple tulips and other flowering bulbs outside the Sudbury Public Library and wondered if Frances knew if they had bought them from us. Frances did not think so.

Publicity for the sale has been becoming more and more digital even before Covid since fewer people are willing to let you post flyers in their spaces.

8:10 Treasurer's Report/banking : Andy made a motion to accept the report, David seconded and all were in favor. Sue reported that the quicken software and computer were both twenty

or more year's old and asked if she could upgrade them if she was able to stay within the existing budget. The Supervisor's agreed that upgrading both the software and the hardware was a good idea and asked her to return in June with recommendations and quotes after having spoken with our auditor and Quicken about maintaining access to history and reporting, view vs write access, and reviewing appropriate and secure back up and transaction capabilities.

FY 2019 EEA Grant Review: Amy did not attend. Sue reported that the work was on hold until next month when she could address the web site and contact list needs and try to start providing outreach and programming via the web site, which is currently managed by Frances, because she and Frances must focus on the plant sale and finances, and all programming must be remote at this time under Covid.

FY 2020 EEA Grant Review: Sue is still transitioning the administrator responsibilities with Liz under the Basic grant. Last month they got the new phone up and running, this month has been focused on the plant sale and finances and next month there should be more time for grant applications, web site redesign and the innovation grant.

FY 2021 EEA Grant Letter of Inquiry: The supervisors confirmed their interest in applying for this round of grant funding. The Letter of Inquiry is due to Tom Anderson by May 29th. Liz M, Patrick and Sue agreed to work on it.

Training update: Patrick completed his training. Liz A completed the Supervisor training and will finish the additional courses next month. Andrew has a house full of internet users, but will also make progress shortly.

Supervisor Elections Recruitment: Sue pointed out the Elizabeth Austen had been attending meetings for 3 months now, has invested time in training, and planned to volunteer for the plant sale. She wondered how the Board might feel about electing her as an Associate Supervisor, which had been discussed, but not acted on previously. Andrew promptly made the motion, Kathie seconded, all were in favor and Elizabeth A was made official!

Patrick recommended that the Board draft a job description for Supervisor recruitment. He will share the profile form Acton uses to recruit town volunteers. Once the Board settles on a job description (in accordance with the material and process outlined in the Supervisor manual and training) Sue will add the EEOC statement to the job description.

Andrew made the motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:58 p.m. Kathie and David seconded, all were in favor.

The next Board of Supervisor's Meeting will be Monday, June 8th at 6:45 pm.

Minutes recorded and respectfully submitted,

Susan Lavigne Thomas

District Administrator

