

Orchard Working Group Minutes - 4/18/2024

Meeting was called to order at 7:30pm on April 18th.

Present: Matthew Nordhaus, Brad Mitchell, Amy Tarlow Lewis, Jen Clancy, Will Pickard

Attending Remotely: Sarah Seaward

Absent: Karen Morrison

Approval of Minutes of 4/5/24

Minutes were approved with clarification that the minutes should reference April 5th, not April 10th. Moved by Amy Tarlow Lewis, Seconded by Jen Clancy. Motion carried 5-0

Discussion and Public Input - Approval of Final Sale of Orchard at May Town Meeting

Brad Mitchell summarized that we wanted to discuss the process for approval of the sale of the Orchard at Town Meeting. The community members who attended our previous meeting asked that the public have more input.

Proposal for creation of an RFP Evaluation Committee

Matthew Nordhaus circulated a proposal, but said that based on individual feedback he had gotten already we should start with a revision of that proposal. General feedback was that there should be more public input but we don't need to create a whole new committee. Matthew stated he wanted to complete a concrete proposal tonight so that the Select Board could vote on it.

The two places that everyone agreed that there needed to be more input was the RFP criteria, and reviewing the applicants.

Criteria for RFP and Applicant Review

Discussions on the need for clear criteria in the RFP (Request for Proposal) process.

The Working Group agreed that there should be an emphasis on agricultural experience, financial viability, community involvement, and realistic capital plans for potential applicants. It was also considered important to have community meetings to gather input on the RFP criteria, with a possible consideration of a point system to evaluate applicants based on set criteria.

The Working Group agreed to organize community meetings to discuss and finalize RFP criteria. The Group recognized the importance of addressing public concerns and ensuring transparency. A proposal was made to engage the Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC) to facilitate public input sessions. Matthew Nordhaus will follow up with the Town Administrator to discuss next steps.

The Working Group debated adding two additional community members to the working group to provide broader perspectives. Several members expressed concerns that the selection process for these members would slow progress.

Town Meeting and Warrant Article

Discussion on the potential impact of public perception on the warrant article's approval. Consideration of delaying the warrant article to a special town meeting to ensure better public understanding and input. The Working Group ultimately decided to move forward with the Warrant article as further delays would, in their opinion, be detrimental to the Orchard.

Summary and Next Steps

- Agreement to focus on increasing public input and transparency.
- Plan to draft the RFP with detailed criteria and involve MAPC for public facilitation.
- Next meeting to further discuss the criteria and finalize plans for public engagement.

Motion to adjourn made by Amy Tarlow-Lewis, seconded by Matthew Nordhaus

Motion passed 5-0, the Meeting was adjourned at 9:08PM