Meeting Minutes: Wednesday, April 24, 2019 7:30 p.m.
Room 307, Town Hall- 37 Shattuck Street, Littleton, MA

Members Present: William Pickard, Jamie Cruz, Gerard Cavallo, Christine Nordhaus, Brad Mitchell, Scott Matheson

Members Absent: Andrew Sammarco

Members of the Public: Selectman Chuck DeCoste, Selectman Cindy Napoli, Interim Town Administrator Anthony Ansaldi, Deborah Rosson, Katie Carruth, Rick Findlay, Coby Field, Maxwell Makarutsa of Chelmsford, David Karruki of Dracut, Matthew Kotfila of Ayer

Chair William Pickard called the meeting to order at 7:30 p.m.

Review of Minutes: Moved by Jamie Cruz to accept minutes of March 20, 2109 AgComm meeting, seconded by Brad Mitchell. Unanimous to approve.

Church Meadows:
Brad says he found the property very weedy, very little farming, too much trash around, last year the farming plot was no bigger than Church’s spot (+/- 5,000sf). Doesn’t think the Board of Selectmen should reconsider convicting the Makarutsa family.

Jamie mentioned Coby Field from the Cooper development is interested in farming it. She says the Field family has an interest in keeping it looking good, they have the equipment to maintain it.

Will echoed the poor condition of the property; trash and under-farmed, it’s going over to invasives.

Christine said there hadn’t been any expectations from the Town communicated to the Makarutsa Family. She suggested producing a clear set of expectations with a timeline attached for cleaning up the property and giving the Makarutsas the opportunity to comply.
Will suggested guidelines might be that the access path was reopened, the trash removed, maintenance done, and a cover crop planted, mowing twice during the growing season.

Gerry said the property doesn’t look attractive. Asks if the Town’s concerns had been communicated to the Makarutsas.

Will said an RFP with specific criteria written out for the season and handled separately as opposed to an extension to the current lease would be better than simply extending the lease.

Deb Rosson asked if she and Mr. Makarutsa could go over and take care of the trash, clear up the plastic, take care of the trash, etc. to meet AgComm expectations. The Church is asking for a “from now on” agreement, to exacting expectations for the entire 7 acres.

Brad said that even though there had been no communication from the town, reasonable expectations had been missed.

Christine asked if the eviction from Church Meadows presented the Makarutsa family with a hardship. Mr. Makarutsa said farming Church Meadows is not his primary source of income.

Chuck DeCoste asked Mr. Makarutsa to confirm that he had received the certified letter from the Board of Selectmen. Mr. Makarutsa said he had. Chuck said he’d been to Church Meadows this week and hadn’t seen any improvement in the month since Mr. Makarutsa was in receipt of the letter. Chuck said it was highly unlikely that the Board of Selectmen would choose to renew the lease.

Jamie asked Coby Field if he had interest in leasing the land.

Gerry moved that AgComm vote to recommend to selectmen to extend the lease for the Makarutsas until the end of the season. Christine seconded. Brad, Jamie, Will voted against. Scott abstained.

**Conservation Restriction on Church Meadows:**
Christine said she’d heard from Town Counsel Jennie Merrill today that she was working on the draft CR from last month’s meeting.
Jamie said the Littleton Conservation Trust is not Ag-Friendly. Brad said members of the Littleton Conservation Trust had walked onto Will Pickard’s land to tell him his tractor was too big. Christine asked which members of the Trust and Brad declined to answer.

Christine suggested using Littleton Conservation Trust to hold the CR. Her experience working closely with LCT on Littleton Community Farm showed that they were extremely Ag-Friendly and had expressed an interest in allowing AgComm to guide them through the process of creating a template for Ag-Friendly Conservation Restrictions.

Rick Findlay from Littleton Conservation Trust said LCT wants to learn. There is a 5-acre piece of Agricultural Land associate with the newly acquired Smith Land that LCT would like to make available for farming with an Ag-Friendly Conservation Restriction.

Brad moved to grant the CR to the Massachusetts Farm Bureau. Christine objected saying that AgComm hadn’t seen the draft CR from town council and that the vote was premature. Jamie seconded the motion. Gerry and Christine voted against. Scott abstained stating he didn’t know the background. Gerry suggest he vote against so AgComm had time to discuss the issue. Christine agreed with Gerry’s suggestion, and Jamie said Scott was being pressured and should remain abstained. Will suggested tabling the vote until AgComm has a draft CR from Town Counsel. Brad withdrew the motion.

**DJ Auger Follow-up discussion:**
Christine said she added this to the agenda to see if the letters were written to the Board of Health, Town Council Selectmen, etc. (details in January 2, 2019 meeting minutes). Will said they hadn’t but things had been resolved between Mr. Auger and his neighbors and that there was no need for further action.

**Right to Farm Community Signs:**
Jamie suggested contacting a wellness teacher from the high school to get students to design Right to Farm signs. AgComm could unveil the contest at the Community Fair and people could vote at the Holiday Bazaar. No one was assigned this task.

Brad suggested someone contact Chris Goddard to find out what the sign parameters would be.

Gerry said he was in favor of educational outreach, but thought signs were visual pollution.

**Suggested items for next month’s agenda:**
Discuss the information AgComm will create for handouts at the Littleton Country Fair.
Brad moved to adjourn at 8:50, Jamie seconded. Unanimous to adjourn.

Christine Nordhaus, Clerk

Approved: