

Harvard Agricultural Advisory Commission (HAAC)

Town of Harvard, MA

Minutes of Meeting September 29, 2021

Approved December 15, 2021

Members Present: Kerri Green - chair, Christiane Turnheim, Matt Varrell, Rob Traver

7:07pm Green called meeting to order.

Approve Minutes

- January 7, 2021
- February 24, 2021
- March 31, 2021

Varrell made a motion to approve the three sets of minutes. Traver seconded. All were in favor.

Approve Invoice

- \$229.50 SquareSpace Hosting for Harvard Grown Website

Varrell made a motion to approve the invoice for reimbursement to Kerri Green. Traver seconded. All were in favor.

Climate Resolution

Turnheim presented the proposed Climate Resolution being presented by the CRWG and written by HEAC. Supported by: CPC, Con. Comm., HEAC, Garden Club, HCT, PB, Transportation Commission, and Select Board.

In summary it commits Harvard to focus on not only the fiscal costs but also long term environmental costs/impacts will be considered for projects for the town.

Traver wants to know what the word “commits” really means. Green reads it as high priority, but Turnheim says it as a more formal/mandatory parameters and evaluations, as the town now has a less formal/non-required process. This resolution would enact a mandatory requirement.

Green understands it as a resolution in order for the Select Board to establish a criteria and formalize something going forward.

Traver asked if it's a private or private sector thing. Turnheim and Green agree it is public sector and not enforceable for private sector.

Varrell understands it as a resolution - a starting point. The timeline in it gives it teeth so the Select Board will act on it, otherwise it's just a resolution to feel good about.

Traver feels the wording within the resolution is a little unclear that it is solely public sector, and some edits would make the differentiation would be helpful.

Turnheim stated it's too late to wordsmith it - but could be done on the floor of town meeting.

Varrell made a motion for Ag. Comm. to support the proposed Climate Resolution. Turnheim seconded. Traver asked if it needed to be majority or unanimous in the vote.

- Varrell - yes
- Turnheim - yes
- Green - yes
- Traver - abstain

Proposed Erosion Control Bylaw

Green made note this is more paired down compared to the last attempt in 2018. Went from 11 pages to this version which is 4.5 pages. Green feels this version offers ample exemption not to impede agriculture and normal property maintenance. Traver asked about the last attempt and recalled past member's concerns with that version.

Varrell feels the proposed bylaw is comparable and consistent with other communities based on his professional expertise/experience. He feels the proposed bylaw is largely focussed towards being able to enforce those "bad apple" situations.

Traver referred to G - 1 that referenced the violation turnaround time. Varrell spoke to that within a municipality the enforcement officer can determine fines and time, and often work with a resident. But the teeth needs to be there in the language for the situations when the offender is not a homeowner, but a developer.

Green mentioned another past member's concerns over the area applicability thresholds within this version.

Traver asked if a farmer plows an acre of field, and leaves it open to the elements, that would put you in violation. Green reminded Traver that Ag. is exempt unless you fall within the 100ft buffer of a wetland in which you would require permission from Con. Comm.

Varrell made a motion for Ag. Comm. to support ch. 125-58 Erosion Control Bylaw as presented. Traver seconded. Turnheim asked if this bylaw applied to all of Harvard, not just within a wetland area. Green answered yes this was for all of Harvard. All voted in favor.

DLTA Grant Update

Green reminded members about the kickoff meeting that took place back in early July with MRPC about. Green and Traver attended this meeting to provide insight as to what our Ag. Comm.'s needs are. MRPC is proposing to research and produce a report as to what options are available to support Ag. Commissions. Green's concerns lie with the deliverable being a report with options that are available, rather than an actual solution to the fulfill the need. Green anticipates a meeting in December where MRPC will present the report to the commission.

Harvard Grown Brochure

Members discussed potential locations for leaving Harvard Grown brochures. There are a few boxes at town hall, and Green mentioned at the recent All Boards Meeting that members of other boards perhaps grab a stack to bring to their offices.

Brain Stormed Locations:

- Rest Area on rte. 2 unless you need to be a paying member to their organization
- Hotels
- Flea Market - Varrell will have a table for Harvard Alpaca Ranch and that he would happily have some there for taking. The CRWG will also have a table and Turnheim is volunteering to sit at. She will bring some for that table. Discussed the need for a brochure holder with a closing top. Could be useful for future needs as well. Green will order one, and deliver it with a box to Varrell. Turnheim would also like a box as well.
- Moores Lumber's message/community board
- Local Churches
- Library
- Community Harvest Project - Traver will keep an eye out to see if he sees anyone there to give some to

Chair & Member Updates

Currently Varrell is listed as an alternate on the commission. Varrell is willing to be moved to a voting member appointment. Traver made a motion to ask the Select Board to appoint Varrell to a voting member position. Turnheim seconded. All were in favor.

All Boards Meeting for the upcoming FY23 budget season was this past Tuesday. Green shared a brief Ag. Comm. update and goals for the coming year ahead, and hopes to update the Right to Farm signs with the new Harvard Grown logo. Once more info is sent for FY23 budget a more formal discussion can happen.

Green asked Traver if there were any updates on the new “Climate Adaptability Management” Program at WPI. Traver said that these new programs tend to have a slow start, but he would look into it more. Depending on what the Ag. Staffing Study report finds, Green suggested the commission discuss more at a future meeting a scope/proposal for working with an intern/student group to help us achieve ACAP priority goals.

Varrell made a motion to adjourn. Traver seconded. All were in favor. Meeting adjourned 8:57pm.

Submitted by: Kerri Green