

# **Harvard Agricultural Advisory Commission (HAAC)**

## **Town of Harvard, MA**

**Minutes of Meeting March 30, 2022**  
**Approved August 31, 2022**

**Meeting was called to order 7:02pm**

**Members Present:** Kerri Green - Chair, Mattt Varrell, Rob Traver, Christiane Turnheim

**Guest Speakers:** Liz Allard, Conservation Agent Town of Harvard

### **Review/Approve Minutes**

Turnheim made a motion to approve the minutes of December 15, 2021 and January 18, 2022.  
Traver seconded. All were in favor.

### **Review Chapter 61A Google Form & Letter**

Commission discussed the idea of collecting responses in from 61A Property Owners as a Google Form that would have a URL link assigned to it to allow 61A property owners to share more direct contact info (ie: email) and information about their farm's location, production, distribution, etc.

Turnheim also said it would make sense to include a hard copy should respondents not want to enter info online.

Commission also reviewed the draft letter that would be sent to 61A property owners. Varrell asked if this outreach would include 61B. It was determined that the outreach would only be sent to 61A. Turnheim mentioned on the farm contact list she input maple producers even though majority of maple producers are tapping maple trees on Conservation &/or private lands.

Additional edits to the letter along with drafting questions at the bottom of the letter and Green would set up the Google Form to review at the next meeting.

### **Regional Farm Conservation Project**

Liz Allard joined the meeting to share about the Regional Farm Partnership Program (RCPP) and that a conservation consultant, Janet Munson is interested in helping preserve agricultural lands in Harvard through this program. Allard has also brought this info to the Open Space Committee and that Carlson was supposed to bring it all back to the Commission for discussion, but he was not in attendance to do so.

She also suggested another project that could be done would be to designate farmland of local importance with NRCS. Green asked if this was different than a Farmland of State/Local Importance layer

on the GIS map, Allard said that it would be something that goes into more depth. She suggested this as a good first step, and either Ag. Comm. or Con. Comm. could take the lead.

Additionally Allard reported that the OSC received a DLTA grant to update the Open Space & Recreation Plan. The kick-off meeting will be April 19, 2022 with a time to be determined and she said having an Ag rep present is very important. Carlson is the OSC Ag Comm rep, but should he not be able to attend another representative would be important. A public survey would also be part of updating the plan, so any Ag questions would be important to brainstorm/include.

Another fund she also reported on was a Pooled Timber Fund Income, and thought that would be good for the town as well. Green mentioned they had just posed the question earlier as to who oversees 61B, and Allard said there is not designated board/commission overseeing/advocating for forestry. Green mentioned the importance of invasive management and Allard agreed and mentioned it was also going to be included in the Hazard Mitigation Plan.

### **HCIC Climate Action Plan for Agriculture v.2**

Members reviewed and made changes to the first version of the HCIC Climate Action Plan for Agriculture. Ag Comm's final draft V.2 is attached at end of minutes.

### **Traver exited the meeting at 8:30pm**

### **Vote for Annual Appointment Renewal: Rob Traver**

Varrell made a motion to ask the Select Board to reappoint Rob Traver to the HAAC. Turnheim seconded. All were in favor.

### **Right to Farm Signs**

Green reported that she has reached out and requested an updated quote from VisiFlash (the sign vendor the town uses) Options being requested were 18in round, 18in square. Green explained once a quote was available the Commission would vote on what they wanted to move forward with and then the proposal would need to be brought to the Select Board for approval. Varrell suggested a separate rectangle sign below the round that said "A Right to Farm Community"

### **Harvard Grown**

Green encouraged members to create content for [harvardgrown.org](http://harvardgrown.org), and suggested 2 postings per member. Members discussed some potential ideas, and possibly adding a calendar of events. The goal is to frontload the website with scheduled postings to go live at different intervals.

### **Chair & Member Updates**

Turnheim said the HCIC is continuing to work on the Climate Action Plan. Earth Day event will be taking place on April 30, 2022.

**Discussion Items for April Meeting**

- Finalize the 61A Letter and Form
- Right to Farm Signs
- Possibly more work on the Climate Action Plan
- Conservation Programs

**Adjourn**

Varrell made a motion to adjourn. Turnheim seconded. All were in favor. Adjourn 9:09pm

**Submitted: K. Green**

## Attachment of Ag Comm v.2 draft Climate Action Plan Agricultural Goals

<b><u>Municipal goal:</u> Invest in the necessary shared infrastructure and support the economic sustainability of the agricultural community in Harvard, regardless of farm size, to secure local food supply, particularly in case of supply chain disruptions due to climate events and encourage the use of regenerative farm practices.</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Revise Harvard's zoning bylaw to allow greater flexibility for farm-related uses and ensure that bylaws protect farming activities during climate-related difficult times.</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Commit to “Buy Local” for town events and in Harvard’s schools and thus support Harvard’s farms.</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Strengthen the viability of Harvard’s farms by reducing the tax burden on farmers for their land, buildings, and equipment.</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Pilot a collaborative purchasing initiative to take advantage of volume discounts which can enable wider use of organic fertilizer and other farm supplies. Over time, the initiative could get formalized to develop into a Coop or Grange model, which offers storage solutions for perishable farm produce, a commercial kitchen, organizes CSAs, a farmer market and/or manages a co-op store for local farms.</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Offer financial incentives to farmers for investments that make their farm practices more environmentally friendly, e.g., install drip irrigation to conserve water, or switch to electric equipment and install solar panels for those.</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Map land that is suitable for farming but not currently in production. Use the information to expand participation in farmland connection programs. Create an application system for public land leases that sets clear criteria for the conditions of the lease, and is open for public review.</li></ul>

  

<b><u>Residential goal:</u> Through outreach and community building, strengthen community support for Harvard’s agriculture and encourage innovative approaches to farming by taking into consideration the mostly small scale of local farms.</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Establish a forum for the sharing of best practices, results, and challenges with the implementation of regenerative farm practices in Harvard.</li></ul>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Encourage farmers and homesteaders to adopt soil, pest and disease management practices that will enhance resilience to climate change impacts.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Encourage livestock farmers to employ sustainable pasture management techniques that promote healthy soils.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Explore the opportunity of creating a community food/farm project that supports new farmers, hobby farmers, gardeners, provides trainings and resources, educational programs, business incubation support, etc.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support “Buy Local” programs with the goal to establish a secure local food network.</li> </ul>