

Harvard Agricultural Advisory Commission (HAAC)

Town of Harvard, MA

Minutes of Meeting 28 August 2019
Approved September 25, 2019

Present: Kerri Green (chair), Laura McGovern, Nicole Schmidt, Rob Duzan, Christiane Turnheim, Frank Carlson, Matthew Varrell and Robert Traver

Also Present: Director of Community and Economic Development, Chris Ryan and Chair of the Planning Board, Erin McBee.

Green called the meeting to order at 7:05PM.

Ryan introduced himself and explained his role in the Town of Harvard and his goal to grow the Town of Harvard out of it's "glass bowl". Ryan was questioned by the Commission as to what successful growth would entail and Ryan went on to explain his views for a "string of pearls" along Ayer road, job growth, and leakage prevention

Ryan spoke in regard to the Rural Life Preservation Special Permit, zoning bylaws and use categories suggesting the same are too narrow and restrictive.

Traver questioned Ryan's use of the word "restrictive" in describing the zoning bylaws suggesting that "restrictive" may be a good thing for the Town of Harvard. Traver questioned Ryan as to why he felt as though the Town of Harvard needed to grow and conform with neighboring communities. Traver further suggested the Town of Harvard had prided itself on being separate, distinct and apart from its neighbors and similar grow and development as seen in neighboring communities could be harmful to the integrity of the Town of Harvard.

Ryan suggested that the Town of Harvard is considered a commuter suburb with agricultural components and that the Town has been left behind in terms of development. Ryan again expressed his view for development along Ayer Road suggesting the Dunkin Donuts plaza matched his vision and further suggested he would like a development similar to Mashpee Commons and cautioned the same would not be a commuter strip mall.

Traver again expressed his concern that the same would violate the integrity of the Town and further questioned why Ryan felt as though Harvard needed to jump on the development bandwagon.

Ryan went on to explain that the FAR for the area of Ayer road is currently .10 and a vote in the Fall could increase the FAR for the area to .40 and spur development.

Traver questioned what effect if any this would have on the Agricultural Commission and the Commission's role in the same. Ryan suggested the Rural Life Preservation Special Permit (RLPSP) would allow for further growth of the Town of Harvard's current farms and suggested that Green (chair) may wish to grow her orchard out of a "stagnant operation". Traver took immediate objection to Ryan's comments and advocated for Ryan to apologize on the record. Ryan made no apology.

The Commission largely agreed that the RLPSP was not right for the Town of Harvard however some members of the commission suggested they were unable to yet draw an opinion on the RLPSP based on the information at hand.

Varrell suggested that the RLPSP include language that would require new land owners to have lived on the land for x amount of year before being eligible.

Green and Carlson acknowledged the RLPSP would not help their farming operations.

Green suggested the act may negatively affect neighbors of those using the RLPSP.

The Commission approved the minutes from June 26th and June 5th.

Meeting adjourned at 8:50pm.

Submitted: Rob Duzan