

Present: Audrey Prior (Chair), Joan Ganotis (Vice Chair), Dieter Ebert, Pollyanna Ford (alternate), Keith Lincoln (Member of the Public)

Absent: Hank Brandt, Phil Thayer, Cheryl Kasztejna (alternate), Rowan Perkins (alternate)

1. Opened meeting at 7:08 p.m.

2. Approval of Minutes:

Motion: To approve the minutes from 09/18/2023 as amended.

1st: J. Ganotis

2nd: J. Ganotis

Motion passed unanimously.

3. Old Business

3a. Review of potential Zoning Ordinance amendment – Overview of Planning Board ADU Subcommittee meeting: The Planning Board ADU Subcommittee had requested the Agricultural Commission's input on a potential amendment to the Zoning Ordinance (ZO). They are considering an amendment to the Accessory Dwelling Unit (ADU) ordinance (ZO Article IV, Section 401) that would allow ADUs in the barn area of a structure that exemplifies the traditional architectural form of New England connected farm buildings. Under the current ordinance, an ADU would only be permitted in the barn if all of the buildings/structures between the primary dwelling unit and the barn had been converted to living space. The amendment would allow the ADU to be built within the barn, even if the buildings/structures between the primary dwelling and the barn had not all been converted to living space. The intent of this amendment is to retain barns, preserve the rural characteristics of North Hampton and limit added density of new buildings. Allowing ADUs in connected barns would offer these barn owners another possible use for the barn. The Agricultural Commission discussed this proposed amendment at the September meeting of the Agricultural Commission and A. Prior attended the Planning Board ADU Subcommittee meeting on Friday, September 22, 2023 to present the Agricultural Commission's questions and feedback.

The ADU Subcommittee said that any configuration of connected farm buildings would apply, not just the specific configuration of "Big House, Little House, Back House, Barn." For example, if a structure exhibited three of these buildings, such as "Big House, Little House, Barn", this would still be eligible under the criteria of the proposed amendment. They said that the barn must still be connected to the primary dwelling, so if one of the connected farm buildings had been lost (i.e. the "Back House" was torn down at some point, leaving the barn separate from the "Big House, Little House" structure), then it would not be eligible under the proposed amendment. They said that the barn would still qualify, even if it was not being used as a barn (i.e. if it was being used as a garage). Donna Etela, Chair of the Heritage Commission, was also present at the meeting to explain the Heritage Commission's thoughts on the proposal. She said that the Heritage Commission considers all parts of historic buildings valuable, not just the barn, and they felt that the ADU Subcommittee should consider allowing the ADU to be built in any part of the connected farm building structure, not just the barn. The ADU Subcommittee did not seem to be in favor of this idea, as their objective with this proposed ordinance is solely to help preserve barns by providing another possible use for the barn. When asked what brought on this proposed amendment, they said they received communication from a resident after the 2023 Town Meeting inquiring about something like this, and decided to explore the idea further.

The proposed amendment will continue to be worked on in the ADU subcommittee before being presented to the Planning Board and eventually discussed in a public hearing. If the Planning Board decides to move forward with the proposed amendment, it would be added to the ballot to be voted on by the general public in March of 2024.

3b. Brochure Update: A. Prior presented an updated draft of the brochure. The Commission discussed and decided to swap out one of the photos. Other than that one change, which A. Prior will make, the Commission felt that the brochure was ready for printing.

Motion: To authorize A. Prior to expend up to \$50.00 to print 50 copies of the Agricultural Commission Brochure

1st: J. Ganotis

2nd: P. Ford

Motion passed unanimously.

A. Prior will have the brochure printed at Staples before the next meeting.

3c. Community Newsletter: The next issue of the Community Newsletter will be the Winter 2024 issue, usually due mid-January. P. Ford will work on an article.

3d. Community Garden: A. Prior emailed all of the gardeners from 2023 to notify them of the rule changes coming for 2024 and requesting that the gardeners clean out their plots this fall and remove any personal property for the winter. The gardeners had a few questions about what needed to be removed, which A. Prior answered. One gardener asked about raspberry bushes. The commission discussed and determined that raspberry bushes would be considered a shrub and will need to be removed from the plot. Another gardener said that he had been thinking about planting blueberry bushes in the spring, and since that is not allowed, asked if he could replace the dead blueberry bushes along the split rail fence instead. Commission Members thought that was a great idea and are fine with the gardeners replacing the old blueberry bushes with new ones. One gardener requested an extension to the clean up deadline due to illness. A. Prior clarified with the commission members whether an extension needs full commission approval, and the commission members agreed that A. Prior can grant extensions as needed without bringing each request before the commission.

A. Prior received a request for a plot, and informed the new potential gardener that she would be added to the waitlist and that sign-ups are in the spring. The potential gardener said that she has kept bees in the past, and was wondering whether she would be allowed to keep bees at the Community Garden. Commission members agreed that they couldn't commit to that now, but P. Ford said she would be open to talking with her about keeping bees at her farm. A. Prior will give her P. Ford's email address so that they can discuss. P. Ford will also go take a look at the trees that the gardeners wanted removed, at the bottom of the hill. The Commission also continued the discussion of what duties the "garden manager" should have, and discussed the draft job description that A. Prior provided. Members will continue to think on the job description and what the job title should be.

4. New Business

4a. Annual Report: The Annual Report is generally due the first week of January. J. Ganotis will work on a draft and send to A. Prior to add to. A. Prior will send out the completed draft for discussion at the next meeting.

4b. Meeting dates: The next meeting date would be November 20th, which is the week of Thanksgiving. Members said they would be available, so the commission will keep that as the next meeting date.

5. Adjournment:

Motion: Adjourn at 7:58pm.

1st: D. Ebert

2nd: J. Ganotis

Motion passed unanimously.

Submitted by Audrey Prior. Next meeting: November 20, 2023 at 7:00 p.m. at the North Hampton Town Clerk's Office, 237 Atlantic Ave, North Hampton, NH 03862.