**The Whately Agricultural Commission Minutes**

**Tuesday October 12, 2021**

**7:00 PM by Remote Meeting**

Attendees: Doug Coldwell -Chairman

John Devine- Secretary

Margaret Christie- Member

Bill Obear-Member

Jim Golonka- Member

The meeting was called to order by the Chairman at 7:05 PM

Review of the 5/4/2021 Regular Session Minutes- The members in attendance review and approved the Minutes as presented.

Review of the 8/18/2021 Special Meeting Minutes- The members in attendance review and approved the Minutes as presented.

The members reviewed, discussed, and approved the following administrative items for 2021 and 2022:

* Regular session meetings will be held monthly, beginning in October, and concluding in May.
* Regular session meetings will be held on the second Tuesday of the month and begin at 7:00PM.
* Special meetings will be held on an “as needed” basis during the Summer months.
* The listing of Member contact information was approved. No revisions were noted
* Discussion of the Ag Com Officers for 2022 was tabled until the next meeting.

Crop Progress and Conditions- each of the members reported on crop conditions in their area. As a general statement, this year’s harvest was affected by severe drought and flooding conditions. All forage, vegetable, fruit, and tobacco crops have suffered significant loss.

Margaret Christie reported that CISA will offer financial assistance to qualifying produces in the form of grants and low-interest loans. The purpose of the loans is to provide short-term financing for annual operating expenses or family living expenses.

Agricultural Preservation Restriction (APR) status report-Margaret Christie reported that the only APR application pending at this time was filed by the Lawrence and Nancy Ashman. The Ashmans are reconsidering their application following the collapse of their storage barn. No other APR applications are expected to be submitted for FY2022 CPA funding.

Community Preservation Act (CPA) status report- Doug Coldwell reported that the CPA committee has renewed and revised their mission statement. The preservation of farmland continues to be the Committee’s highest priority. A map identifying farm/forest acreage preserved by APR or Chapter 61/61A restriction was presented.

Bill Obear remarked that his farmland is under Chapter 61 restriction but not listed on the map correctly

Resource Replacement Fee Committee report- John Devine reported his attendance to the first meeting with the Committee. As background, the Whately Planning Board has proposed to assess a resources replacement fee for any agricultural land converting to large-scale ground-mounted solar facilities. The Ag. Com. has been asked to provide an opinion on project size and fee assessment to the Select Board.

The members reviewed and discussed the proposed zoning requirement. The following discussion points were noted:

* The members agreed that a flat rate equal to $10.00/panel should be assessed to all solar projects where agricultural land is impacted.
* The members were not in favor of any credit or fee reduction for dual use (ag and solar) projects.
* The members questioned the applicability of the Resource Replacement Fees. Specifically-how could the fees be assessed to large-scale ground-mounted solar projects without assessing similar fees to any other commercial development project where ag resources would be converted.

New Business- No new activity to report at this meeting.

Adjournment: The meeting concluded and adjourned at 7:58

Respectfully Submitted

John Devine

Whately Agricultural Commission- Secretary