

**Town of Lincoln**  
**Minutes of the Agriculture Commission Meeting**  
**Held on Tuesday 1/14/2020 at**  
**Town Hall**

**Members Present:**

Voting: Louise Bergeron (co-chair), Ari Kurz (co-chair), Ellen Raja  
Alternate Voting: Stacy Osur, Karen Seo

**Members Absent:**

Voting: Lynne Bower, Nancy Bergen  
Alternate Voting: open slot  
Non-voting: open slot

**Visitors:**

Steven Kanner  
Ruth Ann Hendrickson (Chair of Lincoln Water Commission)

**7:30pm Meeting commenced**

**Minutes**

11/12/2019 minutes – Approved subject to agreed upon changes (Unanimously)  
12/ 10/2019 minutes – Approved subject to agreed upon changes (Unanimously)

**Old Action Items**

- \*\* 11/8/2017 Action item – Karen to check the Food Corps website and see if perhaps they could help with promoting more education about farming in the Lincoln schools. For example, would they be able/willing to help establish and care for a garden in Lincoln's school(s).
- \*\* 1-16-2018 Action item -- Lynne to add link on Ag Comm web page for New Entry Farming Project.
- \*\* 1-16-2018 Action item – Stacy to investigate whether Ag Comm funds can be used for Mini-grants
- \*\* 2-14-2018 Action item – Karen to get information on organizations that provide workshops, resources, etc. to schools to teach about farming.
- \*\* 11/13/2018 Action item – Lynne to see if she still has a copy of the film on the history of Lincoln farming (Janet Boynton) and if she does to post it on the Lincoln Ag Comm web page.
- \*\* 12/11/2018 Action Item -- Ari to find out the name of the artist and obtain permission to reprint the Lincoln Review's drawings of barns.
- \*\* 12/11/2018 Action Item -- Ari to contact Diane Augur (Friends for Tomorrow at Berryfield Farm) re: Ag Comm membership

- \*\* 1/22/2019 Action Item -- Louise to send Margie copy of Annual reports for 2017 and 2018.
- \*\* 1/22/2019 Action Item -- Ari to ask Matt Celona and Richard Nichols about joining Ag Comm
- \*\* 1/22/2019 Action Item -- Ari to ask Matt Celona (Drumlin farmer) re: having interns attend Ag Comm meetings
- \*\* 2/12/2019 Action item – Need volunteer to send a message to Lincoln Talk to recruit members. Task would consist of writing and sending a message to Lincoln talk using the AgCom email address and in then following up with responses.
- \*\* 2/12/2019 Action item – Stacy to check with librarians re: status of the purchase of books from the list that Louise sent her
- \*\* 2/12/2019 Action item – Stacy to see what possibilities exist for somehow grouping all the agricultural books together in a single physical location.
- \*\* 2/12/2019 Action item – Stacy to check on whether if we create a pamphlet listing all of the agricultural books, this pamphlet could be made accessible at the library and on the library’s web site.
- \*\* 2/12/2019 Action item – We would like to gather stories about specific barns. All to send information to Lynne by email.
- \*\* 2/12/2019 Action item – Need someone to take the responsibility to write up and distribute the agricultural tip messages at the appropriate dates and follow up on responses.
- \*\* 3/12/2019 Action Item -- Margie to ask Andy Payne (developer of the “shopping cart”) for ideas to promote buying local produce and meat
- \*\* 3/12/2019 Action Item -- Ari to talk to Jennifer Burney re: promoting buying local produce and meat.
- \*\* 3/12/2019 Action Item -- Lynne to talk to Patrice about creating a central link “Buy Local”
- \*\* 4/9/2019 Action item – Waiting on Codman to notify Ag Comm on when the memorial bench for Beth Taylor can be delivered.
- \*\* 4/9/2019 Action Item -- Lynne to put the list of agricultural books on the Ag Comm web site.
- \*\* 4/9/2019 Action Item -- All to think about ideas for future workshops/presentations, e.g.:
  - growing pawpaws Margie’s sister grows them commercially
  - raising chickens
  - beekeeping.
- \*\* 5/15/2019 Action Item -- Stacy and Lynne to work on public outreach to gather information on Lincoln barns. This will be done via messages to be sent to Lincoln Talk, Lincoln Journal and the Squirrel.

- \*\* 5/15/2019 Action Item -- Lynne to ask the Lincoln Historical Society for their list of historical barns that they'd like to see included in the planned book on Barns of Lincoln.
- \*\* 5/15/2019 Action Item -- Lynne and Stacy to work on pulling together a draft proposal on Barns of Lincoln that can be submitted to a publisher.
- \*\* 5/15/2019 Action Item -- Margie to work on some draft templates for historic barns using Minute Man barns as a starting point.
- \*\* 5/15/2019 Action Item -- We have allocated some 2019 funds for photography for the book Barns of Lincoln. In June, we will allocate any remaining 2019 funds to this book.
- \*\* 5/15/2019 Action Item -- Lynne to ask the Lincoln Historical Society to provide the Ag Comm with a list of barns that they recommend for inclusion.
- \*\* 5/15/2019 Action Item -- Ari to bring a proposal for a talk on Deer Management to the Ag Comm June meeting.
- \*\* 5/15/2019 Action Item -- All to review OLD Action items by next meeting.
- \*\* 6/11/2019 Action Item -- At upcoming Con Comm meeting, Ari to mention some of the steps the Ag Comm is taking re: deer population management.
- \*\*7/9/2019 Action Item -- Margie to see if she can get access to information from the 1986 barn tour – try contacting Suze Craig (Westport), Sally Hodges (college student), Peg Marsh (NH)
- \*\*7/9/2019 Action Item -- Lynne to contact Sarah to coordinate with Lincoln's Historic Commission re: book on Lincoln's barns
- \*\*7/9/2019 Action Item -- Ellen to get info gathered by Nathan (last name?) on Lincoln's barns.
- get review/feedback from Ag Comm and incorporate the feedback
  - run the survey by Con Comm and incorporate their feedback
  - distribute the survey by:
    - posting the survey online, e.g., via Survey Monkey, Google Survey, etc.
    - distributing a link to the online survey via the LLCT/RLF, Garden Club, Lincoln Squirrel, LIncolnTalk
    - maybe putting a link to the survey on town web site
- \*\* 11/12/2019 Action Item – Ari to discuss with Con Comm board possibly requiring participation by those licensing land to participate in Ag Comm meetings and support AgComm efforts/activities.
- \*\* 11/12/2019 Action Item – Karen to follow up on a lead for a possible new Ag Comm member.
- \*\* 12/10/2019 Action Item -- Ari to send Elaine Carroll (town administrative support) a copy of the slides the Ag Comm presented to the town describing the zoning bylaw changes proposed (and approved) at town meeting) re: agriculture.

\*\*12/10/2019 Action Item – All to provide feedback, i.e., a list of format to be Included for each barn, perhaps for a specific barn, maybe how to present your barn, etc.

### **7:32 Meeting commenced**

#### ***Agricultural water fee rates***

On 1/7/2020, members of the Lincoln farming community and the Ag Comm attended a meeting of the Water Commission/Board to discuss the Board’s decision to rescind the agricultural water rate policy (effective 10/1/2019). The Ag Comm presented a letter describing their concerns, asking for information, and proposing next steps (See Appendix A for details.) The Water Board/Commission did not have answers available for most of the Ag Comm’s questions, e.g., how were the farms who were receiving the agricultural rate selected? how much water were the farms using? what was the impact of the agricultural rate? etc.). The Board wanted to know how to define who/what qualifies as a “farm.” The Ag Comm suggested using the state’s definition for who is entitled to agricultural exemptions under Chapter 40A of zoning laws, section 3, namely, parcels greater than 2 acres (in Lincoln 80,000 sq. ft.) zoned for agriculture, (virtually all of Lincoln), where gross sales of products from agriculture exceed \$1000 per acre annually. The Ag Comm proposed that the Water Board leave the agricultural rate in place for 1 year to give farmers time to make changes to accommodate the new rates. The Ag Comm also proposed the formation of a working group composed of members of the Water Department and the Agriculture Commission to clarify the consequences of water usage for farming in Lincoln as well as the importance of favorable rates for farmers and to explore and make recommendations on how we can work together to manage our water resources in a manner consistent with sustainable agriculture practices and water conservation.

There are 2 meetings of the Water Commission/Board coming up.

1. 1/21/2020 9am -- Special finance meeting (open to all) to discuss rates
2. 2/4/2020 9am – Meeting to approve the rates

In setting rates, there needs to be a balance between who is charged what rates vs his/her usage and reduced usage (due to increased rates) vs maintaining adequate revenues.

**\*\*1/14/2020 Action Item** – Any who can to attend the upcoming Water Commission/Board meetings (9AM 1/21/2020 and 9AM 2/4/2020).

#### ***Deer Management***

Agreed to defer pursuit of this issue to the Conservation Commission

**8:55 pm -- Meeting adjourned**

## Appendix A – Letter to Water Commission/Board re: Agricultural Water Rate

January 6, 2020

The Lincoln Agricultural Commission partnering with local farmers would like to discuss the agricultural water rate that had been in effect for years but was rescinded with a decision from the Water Commissioners at the June 12, 2019 meeting. The elimination of agricultural water fees was announced in July 2019, and took effect on September 30, 2019.

As indicated in the vision statement for the Town of Lincoln, our community cherishes its rural history and agricultural character. The Agricultural Commission was formed with the mission to preserve, protect, and promote agriculture in Lincoln. As part of our mandate, we work closely with all town boards and commissions as well as with regional and state agencies to ensure that all initiatives are consistent with promoting a sustainable agricultural community.

The Agricultural Commission hosted a discussion on January 2, 2020, to review the water usage rate changes and the importance of affordable water for the livelihood of farmers. Farmers in attendance included representatives/owners of Raja Farm, Flint Farm, Codman Farms, Lindentree Farm, Kanner orchards, and the Bergeron-Furman homestead. In addition, Stacy Osur from the Agricultural Commission and Sara Mattes attended. Karen Seo from Wesson Farm could not attend but was involved in prior discussions. The rescinding of the agricultural water rates came as a surprise to many farmers in Lincoln. A notice of the rate change was included in the July water bill, but most only realized that changes had been made when new water bills came out in November. Outreach from the Water Department directly to the farmers who qualified for agricultural rates would have been helpful. The Agricultural Commission would have welcomed the opportunity to provide input and present alternatives if invited to the June 12 meeting of the Water Commissioners where deliberation about water rates occurred. Also, the Agricultural Commission could have assisted in communicating with the affected farmers.

Agricultural water rates are important to the viability of farms in Lincoln. Farmers use town water to wash vegetables, maintain community gardens, and water crops when wells are not available or treated water is required. Building wells is a significant expense that many small farmers cannot absorb and would discourage small startup agricultural operations. Furthermore, drawing from the aquifer via private wells does not provide an appropriate solution to water conservation.

The Lincoln Agricultural Commission, representing Lincoln farmers, would like to discuss the recently rescinded agricultural rates and possible alternatives. The reasons for rescinding the AG rates were never made clear to farmers or the greater Lincoln community.

Questions that arose among farmers include:

- How does the agricultural rate affect water usage and Water Department finances?

- How much do farmers use over the course of an entire year compared to residential use?
- Who qualified for the agricultural rates fee structure that was temporarily established on March 8, 2017?
- What type of farm registration was required to be eligible for the agricultural water rate and was this officially announced to local farmers so they would know if they qualified and what steps to take if necessary to qualify?

If water conservation or the need for increased revenue for the Water Department were significant drivers of the decision to rescind agricultural water rates, we would like to have the chance to examine alternatives that are less damaging to the farming community.

The Agriculture Commission and represented farmers support the creation of a working group composed of members of the Water Department and the Agriculture Commission to clarify the consequences of water usage from farming in Lincoln as well as the importance of favorable rates for farmers.

We propose a vote today, January 7, 2020, during the meeting of the Board of the Water Commissioners to form a subcommittee charged with exploring and making recommendations on how we can work together to manage our water resources in a manner consistent with sustainable agriculture practices and water conservation.

The Lincoln Agricultural Commission  
Ari Kurtz and Louise Bergeron, Co-Chairs