



## CITY OF FITCHBURG

Planning Department

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### MINUTES

Agriculture and Rural Affairs Committee  
Tuesday, March 24, 2015

Members Present: Becky Baumbach, Roger Cohee, Marc Jones, Tom O'Brien, and George Vroman (Excused absences: Ed Kinney and Bill Horns)

Staff Present: Wade Thompson – Resource/Project Planner

#### 1. Call to Order and Approval of Minutes

Vice Chair Roger Cohee called the meeting to order at 4:02 p.m.

Motion by Tom O'Brien, second by Becky Baumbach, to approve the minutes of February 17, 2015, carried unanimously.

Vice Chair Cohee proposed flipping Items 3 and 4, as identified on the agenda, in order. Motion by O'Brien, second by Baumbach, carried unanimously.

#### 2. Public Appearances – Non-agenda items

None.

#### 3. Planning for Fitchburg Agriculture Past and Present Bike Tour

The Committee agreed to hold the bike tour again this year and directed Wade Thompson to begin planning for the tour on Saturday, May 16.

(Items 3 and 4, as identified on the agenda, were flipped in order.)

#### 4. City of Fitchburg Comprehensive Agriculture Plan Work Session

The Committee reviewed agriculture types, and plan background, purpose and intent, process, structure and content, draft vision statement, and initial feedback from various City officials, as provided by Thompson. George Vroman stated that he thought it should be clear that the plan should provide agricultural opportunities for City agricultural landowners, and that as the plan is developed and implemented, cooperation should be sought with these landowners as well.

The Committee made minor text changes to the background and intent and purpose sections. Thompson explained the link between plan data/identification of existing conditions, plan issues, and plan goals, objectives, and policies.

The Committee discussed the draft vision statement in more detail, with discussion centering on potentially making the statement more concise and succinct. Vroman stated that continued

support of large agricultural producers should be identified in the plan. O'Brien identified the large size of machinery as an impediment to large scale producers farming smaller parcels, which provides opportunity for other farmers to farm smaller parcels not accessible by said equipment. The Committee also agreed to discuss various agriculture themes and issues and then come back and revisit the draft vision statement.

Thompson also introduced some major City agriculture issues or themes, including market demands, costs (land and operational), support services and infrastructure, urban/suburban development, generational (who are the next generation of farmers?), environmental, and other.

The Committee discussed the issue of market demand, including the current demand for regional local food production. Thompson stated that various regional research indicates that the supply of local food production is not meeting the demand, and that there is a new generation of potential farmers interested in producing food for local markets, but are inhibited for various reasons including land costs, availability, etc. The Committee identified trust, labor costs, lack of processing facilities, and risk as potential factors that inhibit local food production in the City. Jones stated that he thought the demand for local food production would continue in to the foreseeable future, and that community supported agriculture (CSA) entities offer some risk protection for local food producers. Jones also stated that the Oakhill Correctional Institute, in the City's southeast portion, has a program that trains inmates in basic agricultural practices.

The Committee agreed to continue the Agriculture Plan Work Session at the next Committee meeting.

## **5. Staff Report**

None.

## **7. Announcements.**

### **a. Next Meeting Date**

The next meeting was scheduled for April 20, 2015 at 4:00 p.m.

## **8. Adjournment**

Motion by O'Brien, second by Cohee, to adjourn at 5:39 p.m., carried unanimously.

Submitted by: Wade Thompson, Resource/Project Planner

Approved: April 21, 2015