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**NEWTON FARM COMMISSION**  
MEETING MINUTES  
February 3, 2022

Virtual Meeting via Zoom

Meeting opened at 7:03 p.m. with the following attendees

MEMBERS PRESENT: Michael Goldman, Jim Harper, Beth Wilkinson, Lori Yarvis, Jeff Zabel, Patrick Costello

MEMBERS ABSENT: Vaunita Schnell

MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC: Sue Bottino (Executive Director), Paul Holt (Board President), Dede Vittori (Board Clerk)

STAFF: Heather Zaring, Planning and Development Department

● **2021 Operations and Financial Review**

- The Farm has had a good year and has turned out better than initially budgeted due to receiving two Paycheck Protection Program loans (completely forgiven) and individual fundraising.
- The Farm exceeded their fundraising goal by almost \$30,000 due to contributions from 225 individual donors in November and December.
- The new Director of Education, Matt Durham, started and the revenue from the summer classes was higher than expected because the Board of Directors for the Farm had budgeted conservatively due to there being numerous unknown variables like COVID-19 restrictions.
- Farm operations also did better than anticipated and the seedling sale broke the record that was previously set in 2020.
- The Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) sales were high even though there was a reduction of 10 shares due to poor weather conditions during the planting season.
- Some challenges the Farm faced were preservation expenses from rebuilding the deck along with the costs of staff, taxes, produce, and supplies rising.
- The Farm tried to order as much stuff for the coming year as they could in 2021 while prices were lower to try and save some money in 2022 budget as costs for everything are rising.

● **2022 Business Plan**

- For 2022, the Farm intends to continue limiting the program sizes to about 12 kids or less as it has worked out well and provides more personalized instruction, which is why numerous

kids signed up to come back for additional weeks and influenced the decision to have school vacation week programs that are 2.5 hours instead of 2 hours.

- Another challenge that has arose is what to do with the Farm Stand to make it more efficient and if it should be more of a self-serve model.
- Greg Maslowe, the Farm Manager, is currently working on finishing up the construction of the new greenhouse and figuring out how to afford all the necessary equipment including utilities.
- The Farm is still working closely with the Newton Public Schools to make a deeper connection with the students.
- The difference between the unrestricted net assets on the projected 2022 balance sheet is due to a difference between the balance sheet and the budget. At the end of next year, it would be reconciled if the Farm incurred expenses that were not projected, and they have to dip into their savings.
- The Board reviews the CSA policy every year and determines what is the best plan of action to try and keep the current CSA holders involved while encouraging new people to become CSA holders.
- There currently are about 10 people on the waiting list to be a CSA holder but the summer shares will be finishing up in the next week so then the Farm can determine how many shares are actually left for the fall and hopefully get some people off the wait list before opening it up to all of Newton.
- The cost of the CSA shares was increased by 5% for the coming year to cover the increases costs of labor, packaging, and seeds.

A motion was made to approve the 2021 Operating Plan and the 2022 Business Plan by Patrick Costello. This motion was duly seconded by Jeff Zabel. This motion passed 6-0 to accept the plans as submitted.

- **New Greenhouse Installation**

- The new greenhouse framing is installed along with the gravel needed below the baseboards.
- The plastic walls and doors will hopefully be installed near the end of February so then the equipment can be placed.
- Sue Bottino applied for a grant from the State back in November and is waiting to hear back if they will receive it to help cover the cost of getting the utilities installed since they all require special plumbers and electricians to do the work.

- **Solar Installation Update**

- Resonant Energy, who helped put together the solar grant proposal for MDAR (Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources), was awarded the bid contract after the City's Purchasing Department put out a bid for the solar installation since the cost of the project was large enough to trigger the need for a Request for Proposal (RFP) per State/City guidelines and currently is awaiting signatures.
- There are supply chain issues so the battery backup is on backorder, but the Farm will be able to purchase everything needed with the grant funds from MDAR including the battery

before the end of the fiscal year, but they just won't be able to install the solar panels without the battery.

- The Farm still needs to apply to the Newton Historical Commission to get the solar panels approved prior to installation and plan on submitting their application in the next few weeks now the contractor has been selected.
- **New Equipment Procurement Update**
  - The Farm received another grant specifically for farm equipment and only \$3,700 out of \$9,000 has been spent for a transplanter. Remaining funds will be spent in 2022 on equipment that was determined as part of the grant application process.
- **CPA Application Status**
  - The pre-proposal that was submitted to the Community Preservation Committee (CPC) in December went well but they had a few suggestions like removing the request for money for a hot water heater and the Farm contributing some money as well for the proposed work.
  - The full proposal to the CPC will hopefully be submitted in March after the Farm has compiled their full proposal including examples of other CPC approved projects similar to the Farm's supporting the hot water heater request and letters of support if possible.
- **Meeting Minutes from November 4, 2022 and November 30, 2021**
  - It was noted that there needed to be clarification on the November 30 minutes regarding the impact of the solar panel project on the Farm's capital budget.

A motion was made to approved both sets of minutes with changes to the November 30, 2021 minutes by Jim Harper. This motion was duly seconded by Jeff Zabel. This motion passed 6-0.

- **Other Business**
  - There was discussion on the meeting schedule for the rest of the year and it was concluded that the next meetings for 2022 would be May 5, August 4, November 3 and the first meeting of 2023 would be February 2.
  - The Board of Directors for the Farm is meeting in March to vote on officers and the Board will be looking for a replacement for the Treasurer, Barbara, who has agreed to stay on another year to help with the transition once a replacement has been found.
- **Adjournment**

A motion was made to adjourn the meeting by Patrick Costello. This motion was duly seconded by Jeff Zabel. This motion passed 6-0.

Meeting adjourned 7:58 p.m.

Next meeting –**May 5, 2022**

Respectfully submitted,  
Heather Zaring, Staff