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Barney S. Heath  
Director

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**NEWTON FARM COMMISSION**  
MEETING MINUTES  
November 3, 2022.

Virtual Meeting via Zoom

Meeting opened at 7:10 p.m. with the following attendees

**MEMBERS PRESENT:** Michael Goldman, Jim Harper, Cheryl Lappin, Patrick Costello, Beth Wilkinson, and Lori Yarvis

**MEMBERS ABSENT:** Vaunita Schnell, Jeffrey Zabel and John Rice

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

**STAFF:** Brenda Belsanti, Planning & Development Department

● **Overall Update**

- There are still tomatoes, peppers, kale, lettuce, radishes, turnips
- Summer CSA is over. Fall CSA sold out at 40 shares. Fruit share (from Autumn Hills Orchard) is over with 91 participants which is the same as last year.
- Thanksgiving Harvest Bags are for sale. More than half of the 50 are sold. Produce is from Newton Community Farm and a few other local farms. Will be distributed the Monday before Thanksgiving.
- We had 9 interns this summer from different high schools in the area. There were two 4-week sessions. They were great and we will do the same model next year
- Saturday Farmers Market ended and was very popular this year. Once the numbers are finalized, I think we will find we did better than budgeted.
- Farm Stand has also been busier. The Farm Stand will close November 19<sup>th</sup>.
- On track with produce donations. We are donating more produce than ever with \$14k in donated food
- New greenhouse with a donation from the family of Gene Rubin for whom the new greenhouse will be named. The gas, electric, and structure is complete and passed inspection.
- Adding heat and ventilation to old greenhouse and should be complete in November
- We have been accepted into HIP (Healthy Incentive Program) which is an additional benefit for families on SNAP (formally food stamps). Large process to be an accepted vendor and

we will hopefully be set up for next year. Fruits, vegetables, and herbs will be eligible in the program.

- Passed annual review with Newton Conservators
- All the emergency lighting in the barn was repaired to get building permits.
- Unexpected maintenance expense due to a yellow jacket nest in the wall.
- Fall Fundraising Appeal – received a small grant from Whole Foods and Newton Conservators gave a grant for a new garden cart.
- Filled 91 education slots in the program. It was less than last year
- Attended Green Expo. It was amazing! Spoke with people about the farm, composting, events, food donations, and classes.
- Fall Family Party – nearly 100 people in attendance with an emphasis on education. Activities included a scavenger hunt, a museum of interesting things at the farm, mural painting, story time, chicken learning, and decorated pumpkins. The children were mostly pre-school aged and many families were new to the farm.
- Tours, crafts, and volunteer projects with Girls Scouts, Nobles & Greenough School, and Wegman's. A Montessori school and Beaver Country Day are scheduled to come in as well.
- Offered a free gardening class led by volunteer Barney Keezell which sold out and was very well received. People requested to continue the informal garden circle that meets once per month through winter.
- Starting a book group over the winter either in person or virtual and will be on topics related to the Farm.
- Dede will be at the Pumpkin Smash on Saturday to speak about the Farm.
- Partnership program with Historic Newton called Forest & Farms. Discusses how Indigenous People and early settlers used the land in this area based on their traditions.
- Working with Newton Neighbors Helping Neighbors planting pollinator gardens and starting container gardens for seniors at Newton Housing Authority sites. Working to encourage the more talented gardening residents on-site to be more involved.
- Matt has moved on, so others are picking up some of his responsibilities and hope to expand on education programs.
- Barn Deck – will be another \$2k to spot-repair another issue. More rot was found in the joists under the decking. The original plan for the deck included a roof and for it to be semi-enclosed. The project was not completed due to finances in 2013, but the decking that was installed was not appropriate to withstand the elements which is causing the rotting. Deck must be fully replaced. Funding will be needed to accomplish a replacement.

- **Education Programming**

- Education is one of the key missions for the Farm
- Re-evaluating the programs especially due the effects of COVID
- Focus to have on-site programming that is smaller, nimbler, and more responsive to what the community is asking for.
- Incorporate themes that are important like climate change and agriculture.
- Not just agriculture focused we need to add storywalk, wellness, culture, and arts.
- City events are a great, inexpensive way to connect and engage the public.
- Pilot programs for this year and get feedback and review future
- Not going to replace Director of Education position, but instead have a Program Manager to do a schedule for classes, parties, events, small group informal get-togethers.

- Offer both pre-registration and drop-in classes.
  - Different price points and scholarships.
  - Partner more with other organizations and their curriculum and supervisors.
  - Pause the week-long summer classes. Last year there were issues with COVID
  - Focus is not generating program revenue, but to generate engagement for fundraising and donations.
  - Planning a public event for city key partners and organizations most likely in the spring.
- **City Signage Policy**
    - Wrote letter to the City to reconsider sign policy along with Green Newton
    - Item may be getting docketed
- **CPC Project**
    - Basement cleanout is done.
    - Basement Technologies to install French drain, but want money upfront so may need to use another vendor
- **Solar Project**
    - Ace Solar and Resident Energy came out to the site
    - Needed to access and assess the roof to ascertain what was under the shingles
    - Ace Solar gave an install date of April/May, 2023 after originally the date was December, 2022. Needs to be done by June, 2023 for funding. More to follow.
- **Financials**
    - Put money into 1 year CD – may do more in a few months and waiting for the market to stabilize so that should help us in the budget next year
    - Contingencies with cash flow needs due to the capital projects, but those seem to be resolved
    - Q3 Financials – significant restricted donation from the Bard Family for climate change education. Looking at guest speaker series, classes, programs for the farm, and solar energy systems to utilize the donation
    - Restricted grant is for work on the greenhouses
- **Meeting Minutes from August 4, 2022**

A motion was made to approve of minutes by Jim Harper. This motion was duly seconded by Patrick Costello. This motion passed 5-0.
- **Adjournment**

A motion was made to adjourn the meeting by Patrick Costello. This motion was duly seconded by Lori Yarvis. This motion passed 5-0.

Meeting adjourned 8:51 p.m.

Next meeting – **February 2, 2023.**  
Respectfully submitted,  
Brenda Belsanti, Staff