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**NEWTON FARM COMMISSION**  
MEETING MINUTES  
February 1, 2024.

Virtual Meeting via Zoom

Meeting opened at 7:02 p.m. with the following attendees

**MEMBERS PRESENT:** Michael Goldman, Jefferey Zabel, Lori Yarvis, Jim Harper, Beth Wilkinson, and John Rice

**MEMBERS ABSENT:** Cheryl Lappin, Patrick Costello

**MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC:** Allyson MacKenna (Executive Director), Paul Holt (Co-President), Dede Vittori (Co-President), and Barbara Seal (Co-Treasurer), Madelyn Sorensen (Co-Treasurer), Linda Chafets (Board Member), Brendan O’Friel (Boston College student)

**STAFF:** Jennifer Caira, Planning & Development Department

- **New Director update**

- The chair introduced Allyson MacKenna as the new executive director of farm administration and programming and Ms. MacKenna shared her background prior to joining the farm.

- **Financials 2023**

- Dede Vittori presented the 2023 Annual Report and fielded questions from the Commission.
- The farm budgeted for a deficit in 2023 and ended the year with a surplus.
- There were many challenges, such as unexpected costs from flood and plant theft, however the farm benefitted from generous community donations.

- **Business Plan for 2024**

- Ms. Vittori reviewed the Business Plan for 2024 and fielded questions from the Commission.
- The business plan for 2024 again assumes a deficit and budgets conservatively low for revenue and high for expenditures.
- Important increases in expenditure include staffing: a new position is being added for assistant farm manager (being filled by the former assistant grower) and salaries are increased for the executive director and farm manager. An additional assistant grower is also being added for the growing season as a pilot.
- The farm is getting increased requests for programming and service-learning opportunities and the additional staff will absorb the intern supervision.

- The board recently reviewed their educational curriculum to determine sustainable on-going programming and they will be working on piloting on-site tours for families and adults and hope to build a network of volunteers.
- Paul Holt reported that the beaver dam responsible for flooding has been removed by the state and the beavers have been relocated.
- Mr. Holt also stated that 24/7 video surveillance equipment has been installed.
- Mr. Holt provided an update on development efforts, including the increased potential for corporate volunteer efforts with the addition of the new staff positions.
- Michael Goldman suggested looking into the Amelia Peabody charitable foundation, which provides capital grant funding.
- **Farm Operations**
  - Ms. MacKenna stated the farm recently received a \$2,000 grant and just submitted for a \$10,000 grant for no-till equipment and she is currently working on four other grant applications.
  - The seedling sale is planned for the weekend after Mother's Day.
  - A presentation is being planned for April 28 on owls.
  - Ms. MacKenna is working with the Newton Public Library to set up a speaker series to be held at the library.
  - Planning a forum for the summer.
  - The CSA program just launched for members and will open to all residents on February 5.
- **Meeting Minutes from November 3, 2023**
  - A motion was made to approve of minutes by Jim Harper. This motion was duly seconded by Lori Yarvis. This motion passed 4-0 with one abstaining (Beth Wilkinson). John Rice was no longer present at this time.
- **New Business**
  - Mr. Goldman set the remaining meetings for the year for May 2 (virtual), August 1 (on site at the farm), and November 7 (virtual). Mr. Goldman asked for conflicts, and none were raised.
- **Board Updates**
  - Mr. Goldman stated that Ms. Vittori will be stepping down from the board and thanked her for all of her work.
- **Adjournment**
  - A motion was made to adjourn the meeting by Jeffrey Zabel. This motion was duly seconded by Beth Wilkinson. This motion passed 5-0.

Meeting adjourned 7:53 p.m.

Next meeting – **May 2, 2024.**

Respectfully submitted,  
Jennifer Caira, Staff