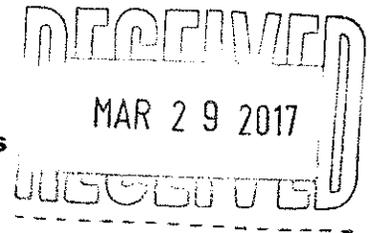


**HOPKINTON CONSERVATION COMMISSION
Farm Viability Ordinance Forum II Notes
Tuesday, February 28, 2017**



The forum began at 7:03

In attendance for HCC: Gary Marsh, Harvey Buford, John Pennypacker, Deborah O'Leary. From the farm community: Deanna and Thomas Koczkodan, Lynn Rubin, Laurie Cherenzia, Judy and Jay Gray and Anthony Pelloni. From Wind Energy Development LLC: Matthew Sullivan.

Farm stores and Farm stands: As it reads now the total size allowed for a farm retail sales building is 1200 sq. ft. plus square footage of storage areas not open to the public. Suggestion was made to increase the maximum to 2,000 square feet plus storage and kitchen areas not open to the public. Harvey thought some smaller size limit might be appropriate for small farms, particularly if the definition of small farm is lowered to 80,000 sf. (Questions for zoning as to potential issues)

Sale of food and food products: Suggestion was made to remove the word "large" and thus allow sale of food and food products on small and intermediate farms as well. (Question for zoning as to potential issues)

Changing ideas about farms: Comment was made that farms are changing, i.e. Agritainment, Agritourism. Conference Centers are already allowed. Comment was made that events and weddings could boost farm income. It is uncertain whether events and weddings are adequately allowed and regulated by existing zoning and licensing. (Question for zoning and town council)

Livestock: Permitted in RFR-80 and not permitted in RES-1 zones. Consensus was that there either are or should be reasonable limits on how much livestock can be kept with most discussion relating to smaller properties. It was uncertain when other controls such as Nuisance Ordinance, Health Dept., would kick in. Gary Marsh proposed the town specify a maximum amount of livestock permitted in RFR-80 zone based on the area occupied by the animals (paddock) and measured in Animal Units (or Livestock Units). Gary suggested definition of an Animal Unit be set at 1000 pounds live weight and a reasonable number of Animal

Units per paddock acre would be 2 (2000 pounds). Consensus was that this seemed appropriate for a diversity of common livestock such as chickens, sheep, pigs and cows. (Questions for zoning as to how this is controlled now and would Livestock Unit be a good alternative)

Signs: Subsequent to the original FVO in 2003, the state has implemented a program of directional signs they erect along state roads giving name of farm and directional arrow. For these special state signs you need to meet RIDEM definition of a farm and apply to DOT for the sign. Jay Gray said temporary seasonal farm product advertising signs along state roads are allowed. There was consensus that between these two types of signs, there was no great need for town action to allow remote signs along town roads.

Barns: General understanding seemed to be that because agriculture is permitted in RFR 80, farm structures such as barns, farm equipment sheds and greenhouses are permitted whether or not there is a house. Previous forum we discussed use of storage trailers and shipping containers for hay and other farm uses. (Question for zoning to outline any past issues and whether anything should be newly addressed in the FVO)

Lot coverage: Someone pointed out that intensity of activity is somewhat restricted already by zoning requirement that building footprint plus all other impervious surfaces is limited to 15% of land area. (Question for zoning would be to define and give examples of impervious surfaces)

Single Zoning Ordinance: Harvey noted a discussion at a Planning Board meeting with participation by Solicitor sometime in past couple of years regarding zoning rewrite. The Solicitor felt all zoning ordinances such as Farm Viability Ordinance should be incorporated into one all encompassing zoning ordinance. Consensus was that this would be useful to farmers. (Question for zoning, town council and solicitor would be whether this should be done)

Other Laws, Rules, Regulations and Ordinances: General discussion that many farm requirements are addressed outside the FVO and it would be useful to gather this information in one place so everyone is aware of them.

Solar Photovoltaic: FVO was revised by Town Council in 2016 to allow 1, 2 or 3 acres maximum of these systems on intermediate and large farms depending

partly on land area. Proposed tangible tax \$5/kwh/yr. Gary recommended farmers negotiate responsibility for payment of tax by solar contractor.

Wind Turbines: The State Office of Energy Resources is expected to determine siting guidelines. It was unclear if this will be a recommendation or a requirement and when it will be available. Consensus is that flicker is the greatest concern among our forum attendees. Matthew Sullivan noted that easements were purchased from neighbors of the Coventry / West Greenwich wind turbines to deal with issues of flicker, noise and setback. That might work here as well. WED recommended minimum land area for one wind turbine is 35 acres. We may want to require more. Harvey suggested 50 acres might be a safe threshold. WED will provide more information on shadow and flicker and setbacks at our next meeting. WED initial look at Gary's 250 acre farm is that 3 wind turbines is the likely practical maximum when you consider expected zoning setbacks, wetlands, wind turbulence and such.

The third Farmers Forum will be scheduled for the Conservation Commission regular monthly meeting Tuesday March 14 Town Hall 7 PM.

Submitted by,
