

Ag Comm Meeting Notes 2/3/2022

Present: Anna, Ed, Bi-Sek, Erin, (Elizabeth Lambert and Kurt Thibault attended mediation only)

Mediation

Kurt told the group about his farm operation on East Main Street (he grows a variety of vegetables and commodity crops), and also about the propane noise cannon he uses to keep deer away from his squash and pumpkin crops.

Elizabeth shared her experience with the cannon as a resident of Grant Street, which is north of the farm. She said that in the summer, it went from going off randomly to deploying up to 50 times an hour, 24 hours a day, at a high decibel level.

Other residents of Grant Street had contacted the police department to find out what the noise was.

Elizabeth wasn't sure who else to contact, and reached out to Anna. Elizabeth said that she is hoping things will be different this growing season.

Kurt made it clear that he was unaware of the frequency of the cannon (he doesn't live onsite) and was surprised it was so loud. He said that the cannon is a fairly crude machine with minimal setting options, but that going forward he will set it to go off less frequently, as well as point it in a different direction. He also noted that the squash and pumpkin crops will be relocated this season, and he is hopeful that these changes will prevent the cannon from being a nuisance.

Kurt shared his phone number, and said if anyone on Grant Street has issues with the cannon they are welcome to get in touch. He is willing to do whatever it takes to improve the situation. He doesn't want to annoy anyone.

Elizabeth offered to write a grant for fencing as an alternative solution to the cannon.

Kurt said that due to the size of the area and the maintenance involved, fencing isn't an ideal solution. He added that there are other alternatives he would consider, but that he would first like to try to figure out using the cannon in a way that won't be bothersome to neighbors.

The plan for the upcoming growing season:

Kurt will relocate the crops that are protected by the cannon, point the cannon in a different direction, and set it to go off less frequently.

Elizabeth is satisfied with the plan, but noted that she will have to wait and see how it plays out.

Kurt said he is open to having conversations with anyone about the cannon, and that he is hopeful that the plan will work for everyone.

Regular Meeting

Climate Resiliency

Ed reported on the Plainfield Climate Resiliency Project. He represents the Ag Comm. The project has been awarded a grant that will allow it to work with the Conway School to implement some of the recommended actions.

Mosquito Spray Opt Out

Ed noted that this year the state is developing stricter guidelines for communities that want to opt out. He also said that there is an Immediate Notification List that the Ag Comm should be on.

Bi-Sek suggested that the Ag Comm be as proactive as possible now, as there was some resistance met last year.

Although not all of the requirements are currently known, it is safe to assume that they will be similar to last year but with additions.

Bi-Sek said that two things we can do now are:

1. Prepare the signed letter for the Selectboard and Board of Health by late April.
2. Plan for the community education component that the state requires. This was done via Zoom last year for the general public, and an effort is being made to have an educational presentation at Sanderson in addition to the public forum this year.

State Farmland Planning

Ed will participate in a listening session later this month that will focus on preservation of MA farmland, as well as the impacts of climate change on farming.

85% of the food in MA is currently imported.

Ed said he will present information about small scale farming and the importance of healthy soil.

Local Collaborations

Anna has spoken to Sam Perkins at Bug Hill Farm in Ashfield – he is a member of the Ashfield Ag Comm. Ashfield hopes to be voting on a pollinator resolution in May. Anna has sent him the Plainfield Pollinator Habitat By-Law wording as well as other materials which we used. Both Sam and Anna hope we can continue to have closer communication with Ashfield's Ag. Comm.

Anna spoke with Amy Pulley of Wing and a Prayer Farm in Cummington, who would like to work with the Plainfield Ag Comm and the Plainfield Tree Alliance around the development of a brochure that would educate folks about beneficial trees to plant.