Present:
Karen Schwalbe, Chair
Amy Vickers
Matt Churchill, absent
Jane Vose, Vice Chair
Warren Collins
Heidi Walz
Jack Simonds
April Merriam, Recording Secretary

Chair Schwalbe called the meeting to order at 6:35pm. Stan Ingram of Farming Falmouth was present. Chair Schwalbe read aloud the ZOOM instructions below.

In accordance with the Governor’s Order Suspending Certain Provisions of the Open Meeting Law, G. L. c. 30A, § 20, relating to the novel Coronavirus outbreak emergency, the March 8, 2021 public meeting at 6:30pm of the Agricultural Commission shall be physically closed to the public to avoid group congregation.
Alternative public access to this meeting shall be provided in the following manner: The meeting will be televised via Falmouth Community Television.

Alternative public access to this meeting shall be provided in the following manner: The meeting will be held via Zoom video conference. The public can view and hear the meeting in real time by joining the Zoom video conference.

Real-time public comment may be permitted at the discretion of the chair utilizing the Zoom virtual meeting software. This application will allow users to view the meeting and send a comment or question to the Chair via the Chat function. Submitted text comments may be read into the read at the appropriate points in the meeting as determined by the Chair.

i. Zoom Login instructions: Instructions and the meeting link for this specific meeting can be found at the following web address: [http://www.falmouthmass.us/Agriculture](http://www.falmouthmass.us/Agriculture)

ii. Please plan on 10-15 minutes of preparation time to log in though it may be less if you have previously used Zoom on the device you will use to access this meeting.

1. Additionally public comments may be sent in advance of the meeting to agriculturalcommission@falmouthma.gov at least 5 hours prior to the beginning of the meeting. Documents and audio or video files may also be submitted via email. Submitted email comments and documents will be made a part of the meeting record and may be read into the record, summarized or displayed during the meeting at the discretion of the chair.

Agenda:
Minutes: February 1, 2021
Motion: Jack Simonds/Heidi Walz: Approve the February 1, 2021 minutes.
Vote: Unanimous by audible vote by the board.
**Cranberry Bog Updates:** The bogs need to be put on the schedule for mowing West Thompson bog. Jack will call or see Matt to determine when he is available to mow prior to his upcoming gardening season. Another issue is the bog ditches because the water is not flowing. Heidi said this should be a DPW issue since it is a town property. This work is not in the purview of this board and DPW has the necessary equipment and manpower. The Town needs to be contacted about the bog water issue since this bog can be used for harvesting cranberries by the townspeople. An appeal to the Conservation Commission and Town Meeting is needed for the formulation of a plan for a town-owned pick-your-own cranberry bog for an historic use of the property in addition as a riverway/walkway restoration project. Maybe Farming Falmouth can be brought in on this project in procuring a bog restoration/maintenance grant to amplify agriculture in Falmouth which is this board’s purview. The following people and organizations can be contacted: Susan Shephard, Betsy Gladfelter of the Coonamessett River Restoration Project, Farming Falmouth, and members of this board. The group can then discuss the needs for grant application submittals and identification of other funding sources for a joint venture with the Agricultural Commission, Recreation Commission, Open Space and the Historical Commission. The CPC can be notified of this joint town commission venture. All town-owned properties are insured. Chair Schwalbe will reach out to Jennifer McKay of the Conservation Committee and Susan Shephard of Farming Falmouth to discuss how to go about this project.

**Community Garden Updates:**

**Andrews Farm:** Stan Ingram of Farming Falmouth reported that 6-8 more beds were added on the NE corner of the Community Garden at Andrews Farm and all have been spoken for. There is also the installation of a pinch herb garden to be used as a community herb plot.

**Emerald House Community Garden:** A site plan is developed which will be brought to the Town in the next few weeks. The Town put in a water service and then the water needs to get from the water service to the garden area. The state grant has been signed allowing expenditures and reimbursements for needed items. Applications have gone out and are slowly trickling in. Per a newspaper article, the Emerald House has been leased to the Cape Verdean Museum group. The Andrews Farm Community Garden board is working with the Emerald House Community Garden board and some Emerald House plots may be used by the Cape Verdean Museum group. Per Chair Schwalbe, the Emerald House property is also slated for the All Peoples Playground and potentially affordable housing. All the prime soils are in the front portion of the property and per Heidi, the prime soils go down 6ft. Perfect.

Chair Schwalbe asked if there were other potential community garden locations that were being looked at and Stan commented none at this point.

**Proposed Community Educational Project of Warren Collins:** The board suggested Saturday mornings at the Community Garden so that it would be assessible for as many people as possible. This could be a collaborative project with Farming Falmouth, Community Garden and maybe Emerald House Community Garden with Warren as moderator. There could be a tour of the Andrews Farm plots with information and advice relayed about garden problems. Speakers
will be asked to speak on different subjects: Jack Simonds and potatoes, Stan Ingram on the Andrews Farm orchard project, and talks by Russ Norton.

Warren will put together a promotional sheet listing the various speakers and topics with dates. A strategic AgComm long-term plan is being developed and will be discussed at the next meeting. The Falmouth administrative office has been contacted about long term plans that other commissions have written to see if this board can use for a template. These other committees had 20 page long long-term plans. Chair Schwalbe suggested contacting the Taunton AgComm who already has written a good strategic plan. Warren will write a draft and email to the board. The board can’t talk about it tonight, but Chair Schwalbe will put it on the agenda for April.

**Lands in 61A:** Amy stated there are not a lot of properties under 61A, maybe 25 parcels on the Tax Assessors’ list. There are 2 separate lists and the properties were divided up with different criteria. Some are flagged as non-61A properties and may qualify for agricultural status. Chair Schwalbe will email the list to the board and will attach to the minutes. There is active farming that meets the 61A criteria and this will start a conversation. The board will discuss this at a future meeting. This list can be part of our long-term planning and we can identify lands lost to development. Future agricultural parcels can be identified and our former AgComm board member, Deb, created mapping of farms lands for this board. Chair Schwalbe will look at the mapping project.

**Andrews Farm Update:** Chair Schwalbe: Lot 3 out-buildings eventually are going to be demolished per the Town Engineer. Geoff Andrews can use these buildings until they are demolished. 

- **Farm Lot 1:** Andrews Farm Parcel under AgComm Care and Control;
- **Farm Lot 2:** Geoff’s house that goes with the lease;
- **Farm Lot 3:** Old farmhouse or Marina’s house with movement to demolish Marina’s house and erect out-buildings on Lot 3.

Stan Ingram: Lot 3 has no definitive plans currently. Farming Falmouth submitted a letter to Assistant Town Manager, Peter Johnson-Staub stating that the old farmhouse should be demolished per the Town engineer, which provides further documentation for demolition for the Select Board’s consideration or deliberation.

Lots 1 and 2 under AgComm Care and Control: Lease status on these 2 lots is 2.5 years into the first 5 years of the lease. The lease is a 5-year lease with a 15-year renewal.

**Andrews Farm Monitoring Report:** A recent monitoring report was sent to the board. There are minor encroachment issues with the abutter which this board needs to address. The suggestion from the 300 Committee was to work with Town personnel to walk the boundaries of Lots 1 and 2 with the abutters and landowners for boundary line clarification. A plan will be developed to clear the encroachment on the edges of the property. The board can find monitoring report information on the 300 Committee website and there is training available.

**Addition to the record from Heidi Walz:** Regarding the bogs, this board needs to bring in the Falmouth Historical Commission to look at the conservation waterway corridor and work with CC, FHC, and other committees involved.
**New Business:**
Chair Schwalbe brought to the addition of the board that there are 2 lots on Meeting House Road across from Andrews Farm (the sunflower fields and some event parking) that are up for sale. In total the acreage is 4.68 acres and there is street-side boundary and the back of the property goes down to the river and cranberry bogs. Asking price of the two legal lots is $575,000 with Ag A or Ag AA zoning just like Andrews Farm zoning. Since it is not 5 acres, it won’t have the huge State protections. The property owner is not farming the land; however, Geoff Andrews has grown sunflowers on this acreage in the past.

Amy stated she is surprised this land hasn’t gone under contract since developers are very interested in this property. On Google maps, go north 2 lots up and there is a non-40B subdivision which mirrors these 2 lots. Per Chair Schwalbe, Patricia mentioned this property to Jessica Whritenour of the 300 Committee. The 300 Committee will support either AgComm or Farming Falmouth if there is a decision to consider preserving these 2 lots.

The two lots are constrained on both side with existing housing. Amy stated there may be flexibility to get the acreage to 5 acres with a neighbor and the appraisal per acre is high so the price could be $600,000 in the current market. There is a great protection benefit having 5 acres if actively farmed.

Stan Ingram stated Farming Falmouth has been trying to talk directly to the owner, Mr. Thomas Arnold of 73 of Sandwich Road, Falmouth. Chair Schwalbe said Mr. Arnold is part owner and a realty trust is the other owner. Mr. Arnold has been involved with several other developments in Falmouth. It would only go into conservation with the consent of the owners.

Chair Schwalbe: What does the board want to do about this property?
**Pursue property for a potential Town purchase.** Per Heidi, there are rigorous criteria for land preservation in addition to purchasing the land. Per Chair Schwalbe, this property is not on the 300 Committee’s list for preservation. This board isn’t in the position to pursue this property. A board member would need to shepherd the process with identification of someone who might buy the property, property use, appraisal process. This property is surrounded by homes.

Stan suggested letting Farming Falmouth figure this out. This board can support them.

**Motion:** Heidi Walz/Warren Collins: The AgComm will support Farming Falmouth should they decide to move forward on this property based on reading Farming Falmouth’s decision.

**Vote:** Unanimous by audible vote.

**Next Meeting:** Monday, March 29, 2021

**Adjournment:** Motion: Heidi Walz/Jane Vose: Adjourn the meeting at 7:17pm__________

**Vote:** Unanimous by audible vote

**Please Note:** Agenda items may be taken out of order, per affirmative vote by the Board. Board will consider any matters not reasonably anticipated by the Chair.