

Agricultural Commission

Hubbardston, MA



Mission Statement

The Agricultural Commission shall serve as facilitators for encouraging the pursuit of agriculture in town, promoting agricultural- based economic opportunities, acting as mediators on farming issues, working for preservation of prime agricultural lands, pursuing all initiatives appropriate to create a sustainable agricultural community, and preserving the rural character of Hubbardston, Massachusetts.



Work Plan / Goals

7 items

- * Educate the public**
- * Promote a local sustainable community & economic growth**
- * Develop a resource for farmers & gardeners**
- * Host a regional Agricultural Commission meeting**
- * Agricultural Commission budget**
- * Livestock & agricultural exemption**
- * Develop a conflict resolution form**



Educate the public

Town web-site: Provide contact information for the Agricultural Commission & other agricultural related agencies, Provide monthly articles, sources for local grain supplies and slaughter houses, farm and garden centers, local animal regulations and a page for public to provide feedback.

Town cable channel: Provide public service announcements and listings of upcoming local events

Outreach:

Created an informational handout and have members introduce themselves to residents in public venues (post office, corner store)

Attend town social events: set up an informational table along Memorial Day Parade route 2007(Spring) and/or Field Day 2008(Fall)



Educate the public

Outreach: Send an introductory letter from the Agricultural Commission to property owners who have their land in Chapter 61A

Handed out vegetable & flower seeds to youth at 2007 Memorial Day Parade & weekly Farmers' Market

Host a Harvest Event: Using foods and goods raised and grown in town, have students from technical school cook a supper and sell tickets to raise funds, have a farmers' market area for vendors to sell goods and services.



Promote a local sustainable community & economic growth

Farmers Market: To develop and promote a means for local farmers to advertise and sell their products and to encourage and inform townspeople of the benefits of buying local.

The farmers market was well received by the public and provided a venue for gardeners, farmers, bakers & crafters from Ashburnham, Athol, Barre, Hardwick, Hubbardston & Rutland. It was located on the recreation field parking lot every Sunday, rain or shine, from May through September.

At this time we hope to survey all vendors to get feedback on their needs. For next year volunteers are needed to create a self-governing council.



Promote a local sustainable community & economic growth

Bulk purchasing: If applicable, organize and offer once or twice a year the opportunity for local farmers to consolidate their supply orders for greater costs savings.

This will make be done after the commission has collected more data on the local farmers.



Develop a resource for farmers and gardeners

Database: Gather information on the towns agriculture (uses, farm and farm land locations, agricultural land make-up and products grown)

The commission is still researching how to do this. Many farmers do not want their information in a public data base.



Host a regional Agricultural committee meeting

Invitation: Talk to other towns in Worcester County that have developed Agricultural Commissions to see who may be interested in meeting.

The Commission hosted a roundtable in January 2008; representatives from Rutland, Oakham and Hardwick attended.



Agricultural Commission budget

- a. Budget:* Discuss and come to a agreement on a cost to promote and run the commission.
- b. Finances:* Request from the town financial support to pay for supplies, educational material, etc to promote the Agricultural Commission.

No reason for a budget as of yet. As activity picks up the commission will revisit this.



Livestock & agricultural exemption

Tax Exemption: Discuss and then educate the board of assessors on the financial impact taxes have on the towns' agricultural and livestock businesses and request for a change in exemptions for these types of businesses.

The commission is researching how to go about this. There is plenty of interest from the town residents.



Develop Conflict resolution form

- a. *Form /method:* Work on a form that people can fill out to issue a complaint or concern regarding a town agricultural business and also organize the means in which the commission will deal with these conflicts.

The Commission needs to do more research into how other commissions have handled this in the past.

