

**MINUTES:** Norwell Historical Commission, Monday, August 26, 2019

**PRESENT:** Noel Ripley, David DeGhetto, Bob Norris, Alan Prouty, Janet Watson, Anne Greene

**ALSO ATTENDING:** Peter Morin, Town Administrator, Jason Brown, Selectman, Kim Roy, Asst to Town Administrator

**ABSENT:** Nancy McBride, Jim Kelliher

This was a special meeting called by Commission member David DeGhetto to discuss the Commission's response to the Board of Selectman decision to designate Cross St. Flower Farms (CSFF) as the licensee for the Jacobs Farm fields David called the meeting to order at 7:05.

Chairman Noel Ripley stated that although it is apparently legal for a member to call a meeting he would ask that in the future it be discussed with him because traditionally the chairman calls the meeting.

David explained the purpose of the meeting was to make sure that the Commission was aware of the Preservation Restriction Agreement between HNE and the Town which specified that commercial use was not permitted. David asked that members review the documents and put the issue on the agenda for discussion at the next meeting which David cannot attend. Members felt that delaying the matter was not necessary and asked that a vote on the Commission's official position be taken at tonight's meeting.

David passed around 1. The Jacobs Farm Agreement and Use and Management Plan (March 15, 1989) between SPNEA and the Town of Norwell 2. Preservation and Conservation Restriction Agreement of the SPNEA regarding Jacobs Farm (undated and unsigned) 2. Map of Jacobs property showing area under the responsibility of the Historic Commission. David's position is that although the fields licensed to CSFF are the responsibility of the Conservation Commission, the Historical Commission has an overall responsibility to protect historic resources of the town and the fields are of historic significance. David is particularly concerned that the town is in violation of the clause in the preservation restriction that reads "Owner agrees that the premises shall be used solely for museum, educational or other charitable not-for profit purposes which may include residential, agricultural and non-commercial activities consistent with the intent of the Agreement."

Peter Morin stated that the Historical Commission is appointed by the Board of Selectmen which has primary authority in this matter and does not have to consult the Commission. Peter said that over the years the farms have frequently been leased to commercial entities and leasing to CSFF was not an anomaly. Peter said that Historic New England is in agreement with the plan and should the plan be challenged, CSFF could make legal arrangements that would meet the letter of the law and allow them to sublicense to a business just as Norwell Farms sublicensed to them. Jason Brown stated his opinion that the taxpayers do not want to fund maintenance of the fields and the best way to maintain them is to lease them to a for-profit entity.

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David asked other commission members to give their opinion. Bob Norris stated that he has had long experience with the property and his opinion is that the property can only be maintained by a commercial farm operation. Bob noted that rates for leasing farm acreage and buildings are very low and that it has been difficult to find someone interested in leasing the fields due to the small size (5 acres.)

Janet Watson stated that in her opinion the Commission has primary responsibility for maintaining the buildings and should concentrate on completing the repairs on the Farmhouse and landscaping the yard. She felt that although CSSF is a commercial entity that it is an attractive use of the fields and meets the preservation criteria of scenic enjoyment. She noted that the agreement is between SPNEA (now Historic New England) and the Town and that it seems that NHE is in agreement with the decision.

Anne Greene stated that as a resident of the street, she likes the fact that the fields are being kept up and are attractive.

David asked for a vote to put the topic on the next agenda. A motion to that effect was made and seconded but the motion was defeated by a vote of 5-1. Noel made a motion to acknowledge NHC's main concern as the buildings and lawn, CCC's authority as the fields and the Selectmen's authority to make decisions about leasing the fields. The motion was seconded and passed 3-0 with 3 members voting yes and 3 members abstaining.

A motion was made, seconded and unanimously approved to adjourn the meeting at 7:40.