

Sheffield Agricultural Commission
November 12, 2019 – Approved

Present: Jim Kelly, Amelia Conklin, Kathy Orlando, Bob Kilmer, Holly Aragi

The meeting was called to order at 3:38 pm.

Approval of minutes:

The minutes from the 9/24/19 meeting were approved as amended.

Brochure:

More than 40 surveys were sent out to Sheffield farmers at the end of October. Four surveys were sent back and need to be re-addressed. Erna Lampman will collect responses and tally the results. She will also follow up with farmers who do not respond. Kathy O. will remind Erna that survey results are waiting here in the Ag Com inbox, including the four that need to be re-addressed.

Pollinator-friendly community initiative:

Jim K. and Bob K. attended the pollinator conference organized by the Upper Housatonic Valley National Heritage Area. They shared that neonicotinoids and glyphosate came up as major concerns. There are currently two bills, H.792 and S.499, related to the regulation of the use of glyphosate in Massachusetts in committee. At the conference Jim presented a letter from the MA Forest Alliance stating their concerns with the proposed legislation. Bob shared a pamphlet on neonicotinoids and glyphosate published by the MA chapter of Northeast Organic Farming Association (NOFA), which the commission agreed did not provide the full spectrum of scientific evidence about the chemicals, and was biased toward the anti-chemical and organic movements. Jim and Bob agreed that it was a productive meeting that brought together a diverse number of interested parties and stakeholders. Jim asked the committee: what is our role, as Sheffield Ag Com members, regarding these proposed bills and the use of glyphosate and neonicotinoids? Discussion ensued regarding pollinator communities in our area. It was decided that the Sheffield Ag Com will not act on this issue at this time but will follow the movement's progress in the Massachusetts legislature and in the community.

Amelia C. followed up with Peter and Melissa Martin regarding their pollinator-friendly community bylaw and they are interested and willing to attend our next meeting and provide additional information regarding the proposed bylaw.

PFAS:

There are no further updates regarding testing and management for polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) on farms in Massachusetts. Bob K. and Jim K. will contact Sheffield farmers about the issue to increase awareness.

Treasurer's report:

Money was spent on postage for mailing the farmer surveys. Kathy O. will provide a full report at the next meeting. Amelia C. is in the process of speaking with the town regarding permitted budget expenses and will report back at the next meeting.

New mail:

Jim L.'s term has ended and needs to apply for re-appointment, if interested.

New business:

Bob K. suggested that we connect with the Mt. Everett FFA program and Greenagers. Kathy O. will contact the current agricultural science teacher at Mt. Everett to schedule a meeting at the school with the teacher and Ag Com members. Amelia C. will invite Will Conklin, Greenagers' director, to a future meeting.

The next meeting will be 1/14 at noon.

The meeting adjourned at 4:53 pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Amelia Conklin