

Harvard Agricultural Advisory Commission (HAAC)
Town of Harvard, MA

Minutes of Meeting July, 26, 2023
Approved October 25, 2023

Members Present Kerri Green - Chair, Matt Varrell, Christiane Turnheim

Guest: Nathan Aldrich, Owl-Rock Farm, Bolton Road, Harvard

Green called meeting to order at 7:02pm

Nathan Aldrich - Owl Rock Farm / Inquiry re farmer winery license

Nathan Aldrich introduced himself and his Owl Rock Farm, which consists of a mature orchard at Bolton Road to the AAC. Aldrich explained that he is considering adding a small cidery to the farm to produce bottled hard cider. The plan includes to erect 1200 square feet building for storage and another 500 square feet building for bottling of about 400 gallons of hard cider. Sales are planned at farmers markets and in stores. Aldrich asked whether the AAC can provide insight into required permits and licenses and how much the town is involved. Green informed him about the farmer winery license issued by the State of MA according to [M.G.L. c. 138, § 19B](#).

The town of Harvard is not part of this process or must sign off. The town respectively the Local Licensing Authority would only be involved if a farmer wants to pour wine on the property or have tasting events. Such activities need permission by the Select Board. Varrell suggested if special requirements were made by town officials during the construction of the planned buildings to always ask on which bylaw or regulation the requirement is based and where the original text is published to be able to verify and follow the specifics.

Review & Approve Minutes

Varrell pointed out a couple of spelling mistakes which were corrected. Varrell then made the motion to approve the minutes of October 26, 2022, as amended. Turnheim seconded. All were in favor and the minutes were approved.

Response from Harvard BOH Re: Stable Permit Memorandum

The AAC had sent a memorandum to the Board of Health in June 23 in support of a stable permit for a resident in town center (13 Mass Avenue). In their response, the Board of Health assured the AAC that the state regulations in respect to stable permits (MGL Ch. 111, Sec. 155) were “interpreted its considerations in the BOH’s review and issuance of stable permits.” And “If the property owner for 13 Mass. Ave. would like to submit a 2023 Stable Permit Application, the BOH will consider issuance according to this process.” No application was filed by the owner since the denial of the original application in 2018. In the following discussion of the response Turnheim expressed surprise that only 14 stable permits currently are listed in the town of Harvard as anyone driving through town can count more than 14 locations where horses, goats or sheep are held on the property and therefore most likely buildings are used as stables. The state regulation section 155 also empowers local boards of health to define requirements for stables such as drainage, ventilation, size and character of stalls, bedding, number of animals and storage and handling of manure. Turnheim asked whether such regulations exist in writing in Harvard as improper storage and handling of manure for example could have negative implications for private wells and other environmental effects. Green responded that she hasn’t been able to find anything in writing and will follow up with the chair of the Board of Health. Varrell made a motion that Green will have an informal discussion with the Chair of the BOH to review the recent correspondence between AAC and BOH to determine if further discussion is needed or review by town counsel in respect to lack of written regulations is warranted. Turnheim seconded, all were in favor and the motion was approved.

Review & Approve Invoices for Reimbursement to Kerri Green

Squarespace for hosting \$267.75

Squarespace for Domain Registration \$40.00

Varrel made the motion to approve these invoices, Turnheim seconded, and all were in favor.

Review Harvard Climate Action Plan Re: Agriculture & Natural Resources

Turnheim explained that the Harvard Climate Initiative Committee is reviewing progress toward the goals listed in the Harvard Climate Action Plan. Agriculture will be the topic of the next upcoming meeting. AAC discussed whether the listed target dates for the AAC portion of the CAP are still realistic. Turnheim mentioned that her farm is the location of HCIC’s annual Earth Day events and soil improvement through composting is one of the educational topics that she

covers with visitors during Earth Day. Green then reviewed the planned educational events organized by AAC with speakers and confirmed with each AAC member that they are on track with the prep tasks they had accepted and the first event can happen as planned in early spring 2024.

Determine date of next meeting

The next AAC meeting will be on 9/27/23.

Adjourn

Varrell made a motion to adjourn. Turnheim seconded. All were in favor. The meeting was adjourned at 8:43 pm.

Submitted by: C. Turnheim