

Gill Agricultural Commission Minutes -- Oct. 1, 2009

Present: Steve Damon, Shirley Flagg, Kathy Litchfield

The meeting was called to order.

Approval of August and September minutes: Kathy made motion to approve; Shirley seconded. Minutes approved.

Old Business:

Meals - Steve continues to bring Gill ag product snacks to town meeting boards and committees and they are much appreciated.

RTF Signs - Steve is still working on the RTF signs; computer is back in working order and he has a new printer.

Open culverts - The open culvert on Boyle Road has been filled in, reported Shirley. The culvert was 7' deep with 2' of water inside. Now it is safe and covered, with a holiday greeting spray painted upon the cover.

New Business:

Farmers Markets – On Saturday, Jan. 9, 2010, we'll host a Farmers' Market at the Gill Elementary School to benefit the Gill PTO. We could incorporate the market with a sledding party for the kids, weather permitting. Market will be held from 9 am to 12 Noon. Kathy will make a publicity flyer to post around town, using the previous flyer as a template.

Gill Cheese Tasting Night – Steve has exciting news to share; the idea of a cheese tasting night working with Gill cheese producers! Cliff at Upinngil Farm, Danny at Laughing Dog Farm and Richard at NMH's farm have agreed that a night in November would be timely for this fun event. Steve would like to ask Candy Apple on Rte. 2 if they'd donate some homemade bread; and ask NMH if they'd donate some apple cider. We agreed to hold the Cheese Tasting Night at the church – Steve will talk to Gary about the potential use and also the potential date of Friday, Nov. 20, 2009, from 7 to 9 p.m. Admission will be \$2 in the hopes of leaning towards "break even" on the event. The Gill Agricultural Commission will pay the farmers for the cheese they give out as samples at the price of \$8/lb. We don't see this as a fundraiser but as a way to promote Gill cheeses. Kathy to write a preview article and a post-event article for the Montague Reporter; she'll also design a flyer for advertising this exciting event.

Sweetheart Night – Steve has another great idea of us hosting a "sweetheart night" similar to the cheese tasting night, but with honey and maple syrup, in February. He's thinking we could ask NMH, Upinngil, Laughing Dog, Turkey Ridge, Bascom Hollow farms to donate honey and/or maple syrup for this sweet tasting evening. Details to come ...

Gill Restaurant Guide – Could we create a simple, perhaps tri-fold brochure, featuring the restaurants of Gill and the locally sourced farm foods they serve on their menu? We all like this idea. The four restaurants in Gill are the Gill Tavern, Wagon Wheel, Candy Apple Tea House and Great Falls Coffee House. All use local ingredients and would probably love the publicity. Steve to update us at next meeting.

Locavore Potluck – tabled for now but Steve said Bernardston Ag Commission would very much like to work with us to plan something, perhaps holding it at the United Church of Bernardston, this winter, possibly March 2010.

Pete Westover – he is a friend of Dick French's, and works for MA Dept. of Ag Resources, and Steve has been in touch with him to submit a report on our Ag Commission's activities; Steve also submitted a report to the Town of Gill about our activities between Jan-June 2009. Steve's reports included the Right to Farm bylaw that was passed; the creation of the brochure highlighting Gill farms that was printed and distributed; and the turnover within the committee with Bridget's stepping down and Steve and Kathy's joining. Pete is creating an Ag Commission newsletter that he'll distribute in paper form, and is collecting such reports from all Western MA Ag Commissions. Pete, and the state, are also hosting a retreat for Ag Commissioners from throughout the area, in Deerfield on Saturday, Dec. 12 from 8:30 am – 3:30 pm and Steve will attend on the Gill Ag Commission's behalf.

Next Meeting : WEDNESDAY, Nov. 4, 7:00 at Town Hall.

Meeting adjourned at 8:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Kathy Litchfield