

**MEETING MINUTES**  
**Pittsfield Planning Board**  
**June 25, 2012**

The Pittsfield Planning Board met on Monday, June 25, 2012 at 7:00 p.m. in the Council Chambers of the Pittsfield Municipal Building to consider the following agenda.

**PRESENT:** Kelly Flanigan, Royce Sposato, Walter Reuter, Fred Raynes and Brent Newhouse and Alan Dunphy. **ABSENT:** Chris Cookson, Jack Wright. **Also Present:** Town Manager Kathryn Ruth, Building Inspector Steve Seekins, Chris Huck of KVCOG and Tom Cote.

1. Chairman **Alan Dunphy** opened the meeting by leading the Pledge of Allegiance to the flag.
2. Motion by **Walter Reuter** and seconded by **Kelley Flanigan** to adopt the minutes of the regular meeting of June 11, 2012.

It was noted that the minutes of the Regular Meeting of May 14, 2012 shown on the agenda for adoption at this meeting were adopted at the May 29, 2012 meeting and therefore, would not need to be addressed. These minutes were passed over.

**VOTE: UNANIMOUS AYE**  
**(Fred Raynes abstained)**

3. **PUBLIC HEARING: NONE**

4. **OLD BUSINESS/DISCUSSION:**

a. Comprehensive Plan work session covering Agriculture and Forestry sections of the plan. It was decided that the Strategies for Critical Natural Resources and Water Resources as well as the sections for Recreation, Culture and Essential Services will be listed for the July 9, 2012 meeting agenda.

**Alan Dunphy** led the discussion on the revisions the **Planning Board** felt were necessary for this section of the Comprehensive Plan.

**Agriculture:**

**Steve Seekins** provided the board with updated copies of the Farm and Open Space and Tree Growth Tax Program charts showing the number of lots, acreage and dollar value of lots in these tax categories. **Steve Seekins** also provided a spreadsheet showing preliminary numbers and types of farms in Pittsfield. It was decided that the spreadsheet would be modified to show separate lists of commercial farms and small private farms. Columns will also be added to acreage and tax classification of the farm lots. The entire chart will not be included in the Comprehensive Plan as information will be totaled.

It was decided that public input would be in form of open meetings instead of mailing written surveys as had taken place with the last plan update.

The **Planning Board members** reviewed the Agricultural and Forest Resources section with the following comments made:

Page 4: In discussion on whether there should be any limitation on residential development as to not affect the agricultural areas of town, it was felt by members that the Town's zoning requirements, shoreland zoning resource protection and state endangered species listings would be sufficient protection for the agricultural areas. No further requirements were felt to be needed.

Page 4: The chart from January 1990 was felt to be the same now as it is unlikely that soil definitions would have changed.

Page 5: The section on the roundtable discussion held on agriculture and forestry issues will be replaced with the totals of the types of farms from the survey that the **Building Inspector** conducted of farming activities in the community. More information will be available from the Public Session to be held in September. The community is being invited to the meeting and the Town will make sure a notice is provided to those individuals who were a part of the farm survey.

Page 5: **Board members** questioned if this section should include only operations viewed as farms under a definition, such as the USDA definition of bringing in a certain amount of revenue. After considerable discussion, it was felt that the **Building Inspector** would break up the chart into two categories - the commercial farms and then the smaller farms.

The entire chart provided by the **Building Inspector** will not be placed in the Comprehensive Plan as it lists names and addresses for farms today and will likely change in future years. It was decided to break down the chart into totals. Categories are already listed in the Comprehensive Plan on Page 5 which can be used.

Page 7: There was a discussion on the Town's sludge regulations. Those materials meeting the definition are not allowed to be spread by the Town, however, items that do not meet the definition as defined by DEP are allowed to be spread. There are a number of different types of materials.

Page 8: After discussion, the **Planning Board** was not in favor of an agricultural zoning district or a development rights purchase program. It was felt that the advances made by Land Trusts with covenants as well as an Agricultural Overlay District were very important. **Members** felt it was crucial to respect the rights of the property owners and not restrict their future use of their property. The Town has a number of overlay districts that have been helpful to direct uses to certain areas and to accent those areas for specific uses such as the Medical Overlay District and the Airport Overlay District.

Page 8: The **Building Inspector** will provide information on the services provided by Northeast Agriculture Sales Inc. and Feed Commodities Inc.

Page 9: Insert the updated 2012 information in the Farm and Open Space Chart.

Page 9: For those properties in Farm and Open Space, it was confirmed that having a farm does not necessarily mean that the land is listed on the chart as some farmers do not file under this program.

The **Town Manager** will confirm the current Farm and Open Space rates with the **Tax Assessor** when he returns from vacation.

Page 9: The **Town Manager** will contact the Pittsfield Farmers' Market again to see if the group has time to update the section. If not, the **Town Manager** will pull information from their brochure and website.

### **Forestry:**

Page 10: The page will be updated after the September public session.

Page 11: The **Town Manager** will verify with the **Tax Assessor** the tree growth values listed.

Page 11: Update the Tree Growth Tax Program chart with 2011 and 2012 information.

Page 12: Information regarding the Town's new grant for a forest management plan for the Town Farm parcel will be added by the **Town Manager**. To the Town's knowledge, no other town properties have been managed and harvested for many years due to the lack of proper access and in some cases, any legal access. This section will be updated. The Town believes that this is important, however, needs to obtain proper access. This item may need specific property title research.

Page 12: Comments about cutting the Webb Road and Industrial Park areas will be deleted as most of the acreage was placed in Preservation as part of a DEP permit in the late 1990's and therefore, can not be touched.

### **Agriculture and Forest Resources Recommendations:**

There was a discussion on conservation and agricultural easements and exactly what do they mean to development of the property in 50 years. If the property is given to a Trust, the farmer's rights to the property are lost, however, the property also can not be developed. Some farmers will put their own conditions on the property. There are various means to safeguard property in the present, however, there may be means by which the property can be taken out of a conservation or agricultural easement or even a Trust at some future point as no one knows how laws will change 50 years in the future.

### **Agriculture Policies:**

A. Delete Conservation Commission. The Town has many boards and committees, and in the current economic environment, people often have to work several jobs or do other

items and can not volunteer as much. This recommendation was looked at several times over the last decade and the commission was not created.

- B. Same – Active farmland will be assessed per State law.
- C. Revise to an Agricultural Overlay rather than an Agricultural Protection District.
- D. Revise to “ The Town will encourage the preservation of productive farmland.....
- E. Delete the establishment of a Development Rights Pruchase program.
- F. Same – Agriculture infrastructure is a critical part of the economic base.
- G. Same – the Town recognizes the importance of prime farm soils.

### **Agricultural Strategies:**

1. Delete the Conservation Commission
2. Same – Continue the current practice of assessing active farmland.
3. Revise to “The Town will review adding an Agricultural Overlay”. The Town’s Zoning Ordinance does not have an Agricultural District at this time.
4. Revise to “The Town will continue to identify and implement appropriate strategies....” This will delete the reference to the Conservation Commission and Ordinance Revision Committee, which do not currently exist.
5. Revise to “The Town”, which will delete the reference to the Conservation Commission providing conservation easements.
6. Revise Pittsfield Development Corporation to Pittsfield Economic Expansion Corporation and/or the Economic Development Team to incorporate commercial agriculture into its efforts.

### **Forestry Strategies:**

- A. Same – the Town shall manage town forests.
- B. Same – The Town should not regulate timber harvesting but encourage landowners to manage their woodlots well.
- C. Same – the Town should report violations of the state timber harvesting laws.

**Forestry Strategies:**

1. Same – the Town should use a professional management plan to harvest town forest.
2. Revise to “The Town will promote the use of wise harvest practices....”  
This will delete the reference to the Conservation Commission.
3. Same – the Building Inspector and other town officials will promptly report violations.

**Gravel Pits:**

**Policies:**

- A. Revise to “The Town will make sure that the town owned former gravel pit along Peltoma Avenue aquifer is gated to prevent dumping.”

**Strategies:**

1. Revise to: “The Building Inspector shall monitor the condition of the town owned gravel pit along Peltoma Avenue to make sure it is kept free of debris and illegal dumping.”

All timelines for strategies for Agricultural, Forestry and Gravel Pits remain the same.

**Tom Cote** was thanked for attending the meeting and providing information to assist with these sections. His efforts were very much appreciated.

**6. NEW BUSINESS/DISCUSSION: NONE**

**7. Adjournment:**

Motion by **Fred Raynes** and seconded by **Walter Reuter** that the meeting be adjourned at 8:38 pm.

**VOTE: UNANIMOUS AYE**

**Respectfully submitted by**

Kathryn Ruth, Town Manager  
Steve Seekins, Building Inspector