

**DAVIE AGRICULTURAL ADVISORY BOARD
OCTOBER 1, 2012**

1. ROLL CALL

The meeting was called to order at 6:32 p.m. Board members present were: Chair Dave Parrish, Vice Chair Scott Weinstein, Julie Aitken, Jason Hurley, and Sam Scott. Also present were Recreation Operations Manager Matt Mlodzinski, and Recording Secretary Lisa Edmondson.

2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES: AUGUST 6, 2012

Ms. Aitken made a motion, seconded by Mr. Hurley, to approve the minutes of the August 6, 2012, meeting. In a voice vote, all voted in favor. **(Motion carried 5-0)**

3. PRESENTATION

3.1 Non-Organic Fertilizers by Bayardo Herrera of Agrium Advanced Technologies

It was noted that this presentation would be seen at a later date. Chair Parrish provided the Board members with fliers describing some of the differences between organic and non-organic fertilizers.

4. OLD BUSINESS

4.1 Status of Van Kirk Property Tax Exemption for 2012

Dr. Scott stated that he would like to thank the Town, the Board, and the Staff members of both the Town of Davie and the Broward County Appraiser's Office for their work in resolving this issue. The property tax had been reduced significantly for 2012.

He continued that although he had made a decision to terminate the lease on the property, he had recently met with Town Staff to discuss the matter further. Dr. Scott explained there was no guarantee the tax issue would not recur on January 1, 2013, which would place a burden on the North-South Institute that they could not afford. Farmers on the property have been offered an alternative site on which to farm, although the acreage of this site was considerably lower than the current acreage.

He concluded that crops were currently in a producing stage, which could be burdensome for the farmers who were being asked to move their crops. Dr. Scott stated that they were hoping for a determination on whether or not the current property would be given a tax exemption on January 1, 2013, or that another alternative may be reached. This issue was on an upcoming Town Council Agenda; once a decision was made, he would communicate the result to the farmers.

Ms. Aitken pointed out that the Property Appraiser's Office had determined the parcel would receive a municipal exemption, and asked whether or not this designation was subject to change. She noted that while an agricultural exemption must be applied for annually, a municipal exemption should allow for continued use of the property. She recommended that a member of Town Staff reach out to the Property Appraiser's Office to determine whether or not a municipal exemption would change.

Dr. Scott explained that neither the Institute nor the farmers wished to be involved in a situation in which they were not paying the appropriate tax; they only wanted to be comfortable that the tax issue would not recur.

Ms. Aitken recommended again that the appropriate Town representative should reach out to the Property Appraiser's Office to determine whether the exemption was ongoing or needed to be reapplied for annually.

Vice Chair Weinstein asked why there was a tax of \$800-\$900 for a municipal purpose use, as he did not believe there should be any tax for this purpose. Mr. Hurley advised that this amount might be related to the unused portion of the property leased by the North-South Institute.

Mr. Hurley said he felt the greater issue was whether the unused area continued to receive a nonprofit exemption. He suggested that this could be resolved by renegotiating the Institute's lease so the unused portion was not leased again. Dr. Scott said the unused area included wetlands and large trees as well as an area where debris had collected. Ms. Aitken stated these portions should be specifically excluded from the lease and should be categorized as vacant Town land in the future. This would mean that the Institute was only leasing the area it could use.

Ms. Aitken restated her recommendation that a member of Town Staff should reach out to the Property Appraiser's attorney to determine exactly what action the Town and the Institute should take the following year to ensure this issue did not recur. She added that because the Institute's lease was being terminated, it should also be clarified whether a new application must be filed or a renewal card would be sufficient. Dr. Scott agreed, stating that he had not seen copies of any prior communication between the Town and the Property Appraiser.

Dr. Scott continued that the Broward County Local Food Systems Roundtable was held on September 25th. Sponsors included the Broward Regional Health Planning Council and the Centers for Disease Control (CDC). Approximately 75 individuals from various food sectors attended the meeting.

He continued that Batten's Farm had designated 1100 sq. ft. for the "U-pick" program, using "grow" bags as containers. They have secured one truckload of soil thus far, with five to six additional truckloads expected so more crops could be placed for this season. He added that seasons for various crops differ from what they might be in northern climates: for example, the local strawberry season lasts from January to March.

Dr. Scott concluded that the farmer's market was now open and locally grown produce was available for purchase.

4.2 Follow Up on Progress for Re-establishing Contact with Residents Interested in the Robbins Park Pilot Program

This item was discussed later in the meeting.

4.3 Soil Testing for Community Gardens

Parks and Recreation Operations Manager Matt Mlodzinski provided a handout on the Town's community gardens program, advising that the information was also available on the Town's website. He reported that a site for the pilot program at Robbins Lodge had been selected and a water source was available nearby. The garden would use raised 12x4 ft. plot beds rather than in-ground plots. For this reason, the site did not require soil testing.

Mr. Mlodzinski continued that a local Eagle Scout had offered to assemble the boxes for the plot beds, and may produce benches as well. No additional fencing was currently planned for the site, although this would eventually be added to the garden once it had been determined how large the site would be. Roughly half the current space would be used in the beginning, with approximately 20 raised-bed plots.

Space would be made available at \$30 per plot for one year. The fee was deemed necessary in order to recoup some of the setup and maintenance costs, as well as to provide individuals with a sense of ownership of their plots. Space was available to Davie residents only on a first-come, first-served basis. Mr. Mlodzinski advised that he was working to secure sponsors for the program, and noted that Vice Chair Weinstein had offered to provide soil for the site.

He concluded that registration and “hold harmless” forms were available on the Town’s website, as well as a memorandum of understanding that participants would be asked to sign upon registration. There had been some phone calls to Parks and Recreation about the program, although no individuals had registered thus far.

4.4 Follow Up Community Gardens Guidelines Regarding Resolution R-2012-171

Vice Chair Weinstein advised that both he and Dr. Scott had spoken to several individuals who expressed interest in the program. He recalled that a list of these individuals was forwarded to Parks and Recreation at an earlier time, and recommended that the Town reach out to these individuals to gauge the level of community interest before the garden is assembled. This would also allow the individuals to provide input on how the garden would be set up.

Vice Chair Weinstein cautioned that residents had expressed interest in community gardens at an earlier time, but no garden was developed; this was why he recommended reaching out to prospective participants. Mr. Hurley recalled that in previous years, a community garden program had “collapsed” due to lack of continuing interest. He asserted that he did not want this to happen again.

Mr. Mlodzinski said he had spoken with Home Depot, which may provide material for the program at a discounted price. He agreed to reach out to the interested individuals on the list and encourage them to register for the program.

Chair Parrish asked where the community garden program was being advertised. Mr. Mlodzinski said public service announcements have been made and information is provided on the Town’s website. Vice Chair Weinstein estimated that there would be a great deal of participation if the program was advertised appropriately.

5. NEW BUSINESS

Ms. Aitken recalled that Mayor Judy Paul had asked the Board to update the Davie Farmers’ Guide. She advised that she had reviewed both State law and Town ordinances in preparation for this update, although it has not yet been completed. She explained that the document had not been updated in several years: ordinances and updates recommended by the Board and codified by the Town need to be listed in the Guide, which included State and Town laws, exemptions and special treatments for agriculture, and other information. It was decided that this would be an Agenda Item at the next meeting.

6. ITEMS FOR NEXT AGENDA

The Board proposed items throughout the meeting and added that they would like an update on the Van Kirk property. Mr. Mlodzinski agreed to apprise the Board of whether or not he had located the list of residents interested in community gardens. Vice Chair Weinstein said he could provide a copy if the list could not be found.

7. COMMENTS AND / OR SUGGESTIONS

Mr. Hurley noted that the quarterly meeting of the Urban Farming Task Force would be held on Thursday, October 4 at the Green Energy Advisory Board meeting. Chair Parrish clarified that the Agricultural Advisory Board was to provide information on composting, use of rain harvest barrels, and row crop grazing programs in relation to this Task Force. He explained that this meant teaching individuals about the basics of these issues. Ms. Aitken pointed out that the Board had consistently set its own agenda and made appropriate recommendations to the Town Council.

Mr. Hurley recommended that at an upcoming meeting, the Board should discuss the steps they have taken thus far to bring together the community garden program, such as the list of interested residents and the concerns that have been raised with regard to selling produce. Ms. Aitken suggested that once the community garden was underway, the Board could teach interested residents about composting, use of rain barrels, and other related issues. It was noted that tin roofs were required for rain harvesting.

Mr. Hurley asked if the Board should be prepared to discuss the prospective fruit tree gardening program at the Urban Farming Task Force meeting. Mr. Mlodzinski said he had met with some of the proponents of this program, and the residents understand that the community garden program would begin at Robbins Lodge. He added that the fruit trees at Berman Park were still under consideration.

8. ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business to come before the Board and no objections, the meeting was adjourned at 7:25 p.m.

Date Approved: _____

Chair/Board Member