

# TAC Meeting Agenda

Tuesday, September 20, 2022; 4:00 pm; Selectmen's Room Town Office

## Previous Minutes

### Old Business

1. Wildflower sowing – Sue
2. Mowing Wildflower meadows and turning compost piles
3. Perennial plot - Joan
4. Other

### New Business

1. Schedule Fall CG closure Day – Sue
2. Wood Chips – Sue
3. Future of Ag Comm
4. Other

## Next Meeting

TBD

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## **DRAFT Tuftonboro Agriculture Commission Report to the Selectboard 9/2022**

When the Tuftonboro Agriculture Commission (TAC) was reestablished in 2017, it was for the purpose of “supporting and promoting agriculture.” While there may be individuals pursuing various aspects of agriculture in town, there is an obvious lack of public interest in agriculture as evidenced by the inability of TAC to accomplish any of the projects they have initiated over the years (see attached).

Once reorganized, TAC, by default, became the administrator of the Tuftonboro Community Garden (CG), which was then being administered directly by the town. The CG has become a well-recognized and appreciated asset of the town. The garden is now an example of the benefits of no-till agriculture and the surrounding wildflower meadows and the pollinator plot are examples of how to maintain habitat for endangered native pollinators. Some gardeners provide produce to the local food pantry; visitors enjoy the wildflowers and harvest seed for their own gardens.

The commission has accomplished a great deal to make the CG sustainable; it is in a good state now. While administration of the CG is an important and worthy endeavor, the members of TAC do not believe that it should be the sole function of the Agriculture Commission whose purpose is to “promote and support agriculture.” Therefore, the members of the Tuftonboro Agriculture Commission believe this is an appropriate time for us all to move on, and we will be submitting our resignations at the end of this (2022) calendar year.

This means that the administration of the Community Garden will revert to the town. There are several possible choices for the continued administration (see attached for what that involves) of the CG

Create a Community Garden Commission: This would be a step beyond the community gardeners managing the CG cooperatively and being answerable to the Agricultural Commission. This could ideally be a mix of members of the community and CG plot holders who would be responsible for the fiscal management and decision making involved in the administration of the garden and report directly to the select board.

Move the administration of the CG to the Parks and Rec Commission: This would transfer administration from the current Agriculture Commission to the Parks and Rec Commission

Appoint a person within the town government who would act as administrator of the CG.

Reestablish the Agriculture Commission with the direction to administer the CG.

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## TAC Projects

When TAC was reorganized in 2017 the purpose was to promote and support agriculture in the town of Tuftonboro. To that end several projects were undertaken: a Town-wide Agriculture Directory, a Compost Demonstration Project, Pollinator Awareness, a Tuftonboro Agriculture Day, and Information Seminars

### Town-wide Agriculture Directory

TAC hoped to develop a town-wide directory of those participating in agricultural pursuits, either commercially or for personal use. By creating this directory, it was hoped that it would promote local agricultural enterprises and provide a resource for people looking to get help from knowledgeable individuals.

To get participation in this directory, solicitation was made in 2 ways:

Information about the directory and requests for participation were included in articles in the Tuftonboro Times, which is distributed to all Tuftonboro residents.

Personal contact was made by a member of TAC to solicit participation in the directory.

Unfortunately, there has been little interest in participating in such a directory, and the project has been dropped. The widespread use of the internet, social media, and powerful search engines make such a directory of questionable value.

### Compost Demonstration Project

TAC hoped to create community interest in composting in general, and food-waste composting specifically. The hope was to generate enough interest in composting to eventually consider something on a town-wide scale.

Several members of TAC attended a Food-Waste Composting seminar presented by Lakes Region Planning Commission. First thing TAC did was to set up a permanent compost demonstration plot as part of the CG. This consisted of several bins defined by cinderblocks or pallets. Following that seminar, TAC worked on a grant that enabled the Commission to purchase a JORA food-waste composter.

After the first year, it became evident that there was little interest in food waste composting, and the TAC members were the only ones to maintain the JORA. Currently the JORA is on loan to Camp Sentinel for their food-waste composting project. It became evident this year that the permanent composting demo at the CG was of no real interest, even to the community gardeners. As with the JORA, the TAC members were the ones maintaining the compost piles. The decision was made this year to remove the compost bins. Three permanent compost piles have been re-established at the back of the CG. Two new half-garden plots have been added to the CG from space used by the compost demonstration plot .

### Pollinator Awareness

Pollinators are under threat all across the country and TAC decided it would be important to demonstrate not only how to attract pollinators but also to provide habitat for native pollinators that would benefit the community garden.

- The first project was to develop a Pollinator Plot in the CG. Plot 1A has been established as a pollinator garden, largely through the efforts of one TAC member. This same person has mainly looked after this plot with some help from some community gardeners.

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- The second, ongoing project is the establishment of native wildflower meadows in the strips of land to the east and south of the CG. These areas have been sown to native wildflowers and are mowed in the fall after the seed has set.
- Not only do these projects promote ways to help preserve pollinator habitat and demonstrate ways to enhance pollinators in the garden, they are a beautiful addition to the community garden.

### **Tuftonboro Agriculture Day**

This is a project that TAC was interested in as a way to build community awareness of agricultural pursuits in Tuftonboro. While TAC recognized that there is little commercial agriculture in town, there are a number of small businesses that involve agricultural pursuits.

TAC contacted and met with the Wolfboro Agriculture Commission to see whether they would be interested in sponsoring such a joint venture. Unfortunately, the Wolfboro group was only interested in our management of the Tuftonboro CG as Wolfboro has no community garden.

This project was dropped for lack of interest.

### **Information Seminars**

TAC has provided seminars in conjunction with the community garden on topics such as no-till gardening and integrated pest management. These seminars were conducted by master gardeners and UNH extension agents. While there was some interest from the community gardeners, there were no participants from the general public.

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### Community Garden Administration

Currently the Tuftonboro Community Garden (CG) is being administered by the Tuftonboro Agriculture Commission. The exception being that applications are being administered by the tax collector. This means that all decisions regarding the CG, including fiscal, rules, etc., are made by TAC. It also means that any work involved in managing the CG, including permanent path maintenance, perennial plot upkeep, overseeing compost piles, hose distribution, etc., is being carried out by TAC members with some help from plot holders.

Administration of the CG could be made easier for whomever administers the CG by hiring a landscaping firm, such as already maintains the area around the tow office, to maintain the public spaces of the CG (path maintenance, weed-whacking of the path to the compost piles, perennial plot upkeep). Distributing the hoses in the spring and gathering them up in the fall could also be contracted out if not left to the responsibility of the plot-holders. This would remove the burden of this work from commission volunteers.

Mowing the wildflower meadows adjacent to the CG and turning the compost piles is already contracted out.

This would leave the fiscal management and decision-making to the person(s) responsible for the administration of the CG. Decision-making could include:

1. Annual updating the application/rules for the CG (administration of applications is currently being done by the tax collector).
2. Future plot allocation – a process needs to be put in place as to how plots are allocated in the future. Proposals could be made by the commission, but decision should be made by the selectboard.
3. Hiring to: maintain the public spaces in the CG, to maintain/mow the adjacent wildflower plots, turn the compost plots.
4. Replacement of tools and hoses as needed.
5. Maintenance of signs.
6. Continuation and maintenance of the CG email account.
7. Continuation and administration of the CG Facebook account.

The Community Garden is an important asset for the Town of Tuftonboro, and its continued existence should be ensured. Current members of TAC would be available to assist in the transfer of the administration of the CG to a new entity as decided by the selectboard.