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CORRECTION: In the January/February, 2015 edition of *Town and City*, we wrote that “any ten voters” have the right to add articles to the warrant by petitioning the selectmen five weeks in advance of the annual town meeting (see #7, page 12). The correct number of voters is “25 or more voters, or 2 percent of the registered voters in town, whichever is less, but not fewer than 10 registered voters.”

COVER PHOTO: Courtesy of the New Hampshire Farm Bureau Federation.

New Hampshire Town and City Magazine Staff

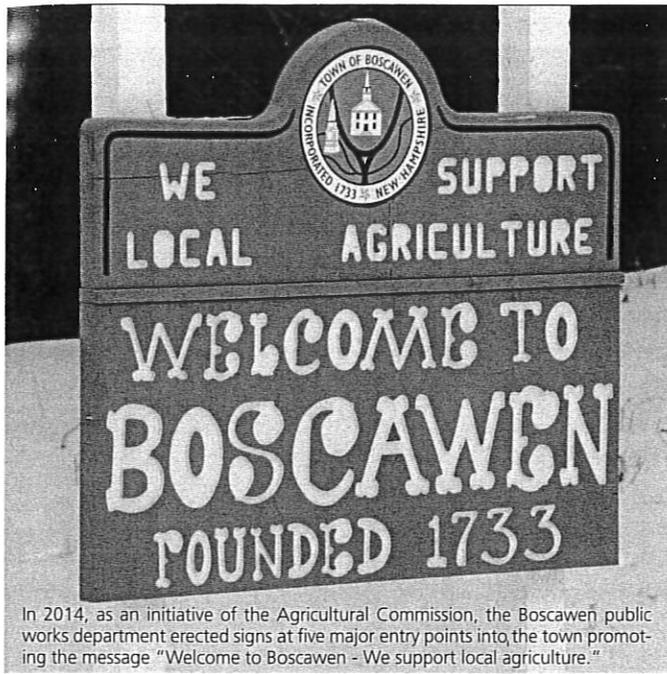
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Agri-culture in New Hampshire

By Margaret Byrnes

In 2014, as an initiative of the Agricultural Commission, the Boscaawen public works department erected signs at five major entry points into the town promoting the message "Welcome to Boscaawen - We support local agriculture."

There are over 4,000 farms in New Hampshire. However, according to the 2012 New England Agricultural Statistics, fewer than 1,500 make \$10,000 or more in annual revenue. As Bruce Crawford of the Boscaawen Agricultural Commission puts it, it's "hard work for little money." That means a farmer's work goes beyond the physical labor and the long hours: farmers must be creative and tireless to reach their customers.

And that they are!

According to the 2012 statistics, even though there was a 4% decrease in farm numbers nationwide, NH boasted a 5% increase. But, our farmers don't stop there: New Hampshire is #1 in the nation for direct marketing sales as a percentage of all farm sales; #2 in the nation for percentage of all farms that have direct sales; and #1 in the nation for organic sales as a percentage of all farms sales. And to top it off, we are #1 in the nation for farms with women as principal operators as a percentage of total operators.

So, how are New Hampshire farmers making it happen, and what obstacles must they conquer?

Agritourism: An Alternative to a Day at the Beach

The obvious tourist attractions in New Hampshire include the lakes, mountains, and beaches. But agriculture creates a significant portion of the state's tourist attractions. This is known as agricultural tourism or "agritourism." Agritourism is defined as "a commercial enterprise at a working farm, ranch or agricultural plant conducted for the enjoyment

or education of visitors, and that generates supplemental income for the owner." (UC Small Farm Program, <http://sfp.ucdavis.edu/agritourism/>) These tourism spots can include farm stands, farmer's markets, "U-pick" or "pick-your-own" locations, farm tours or classes, fairs and festivals, and wine tasting and wine-making classes.

New Hampshire's agritourism attractions extend well beyond shopping at farmer's markets or apple-picking in October. Our countryside boasts over 15 vineyards and numerous chocolatiers and creameries. For example, at Jewell Town Vineyards in South Hampton, you can spend the day learning to make wine, sampling "made-in-New Hampshire" wines, meandering through the art gallery, and shopping in the gift shop. You could also enjoy a horse-drawn sleigh ride at Ragged View Farm in Andover or spend a Saturday at Mac's Maple Farm during March—also known as "Mac's Maple Month"—when Mac's puts on a variety of events that allow people to experience maple season.

Agritourism also includes the many agricultural fairs—like the Hopkinton State Fair or the Cornish Fair—throughout the summer and fall. These fairs provide authentic New Hampshire entertainment, from rides and games to fried dough and draft-horse pulls. And shopping at a farmers' market or stopping by a farm stand isn't the only way to eat "local": you can also eat at a restaurant that is a certified supporter of local farms under New Hampshire's Certified Local Program.

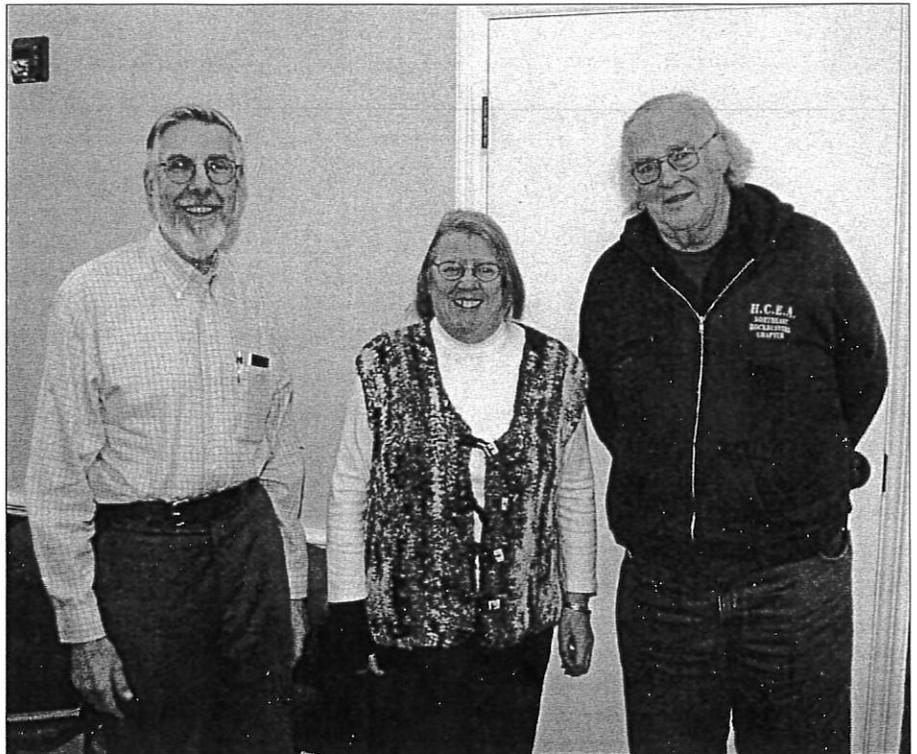
Though its beauty is obvious, New Hampshire doesn't attract "agritourists" by simply sitting back and looking

pretty. Many individuals and organizations work tirelessly to support and promote agriculture and what it brings to our state. For example, the New Hampshire Farms Network is a non-profit organization whose goal is “the education of our citizens about the important role that farms play in the preservation of New Hampshire’s financial health and of the rural landscape which draws visitors to travel and enjoy the state.” (New Hampshire Farms Network, <http://newhampshire-farms.net/mission-statement/mission-goals>) NHFN works to connect farmers, businesses, and customers to create a self-sustainable system that seeks to keep people eating well and to keep farms in business. On the local level, municipal agricultural commissions, like the Boscawen Agricultural Commission, work to improve the landscape for local farmers by advocating for their interests and helping them to remain a vital and integral part of their town.

Farmer’s Markets & Farm Stands: Never Miss a Good (Food) Sale

Choosing local farm products over imported products is a great way to stay healthy and support local agriculture. The most obvious way to do this is to shop at a farmer’s market. New Hampshire law defines as a “farmers’ market” as “an event or series of events at which 2 or more vendors of agricultural commodities gather for purposes of offering for sale such commodities to the public” and even mandates that particular types of commodities must be sold for the “event” to qualify as a farmer’s market. RSA 21:34-a, V.

But, this definition does little to illustrate what goes on at a farmer’s market. And while many of us may imagine a farmer’s market as a summer event—outdoors, with flowers and plants,



Boscawen Agricultural Commission members, John Keegan, chair, Elaine Clow, vice chair, and planning board member, Bruce Crawford.

leafy greens, and colorful fruit—New Hampshire farmers, like all resilient New Englanders, embrace winter, too, with winter farmer’s markets.

One example is right here in Concord at Cole Gardens. Although in winter the outside grounds may look a little lonely—snow-covered rather than filled with colorful blooms—once inside, you are met with a bustling marketplace, warmed by the winter sunlight streaming in through the wide skylights. The vendors are varied: cheese, baked beans, coffee, dog treats, and, yes, even to greens in the winter! One such vendor of fresh veggies, from Surowiec Farm of Sanbornton, shared her unique process for cultivating greens during a bitter cold New Hampshire winter. The plants grow in unheated, aboveground “tunnels”—similar to greenhouses—that generate heat from the sun. In fact, even when the plants freeze overnight, the warmth from the sun the following day will melt the ice and rejuvenate them, making these tunnels self-contained,

self-sustaining growing systems. But, just in case anything should be amiss, CJ—the resident cat and Facebook favorite—is there to watch over them.

Heart Song Farm in Gilmanton Iron Works participates in the winter market only, selling delicious goat cheese and meats. And even in the winter, Sanders Fish Market comes from Portsmouth to Concord with a plethora of seafood favorites. Hickory Nut Farm, which is family-owned and operated, sells incredibly unique goat cheese products. Their ladies—lady goats, that is—live a luxury lifestyle and produce high-quality goat milk. Even the cheese gets the spa treatment: it actually hibernates in a cheese cave for several months before it’s mature enough to go the market. The cave’s underground environment provides steady temperatures and humidity for the natural aging process, while incurring minimal damages to the earth. If you thought you couldn’t make fudge or soap with goat milk—or have never heard of “yo-goat-gurt”—you’re in for

some pleasant and unique surprises if you stop by Hickory Nut Farm's booth.

Of course, without customers, farmers' markets cannot sustain, and so New Hampshire is making it even easier for people to shop locally. The Merrimack County Conservation District, whose mission is to conserve the natural resources and cultural heritage of Merrimack County, sponsors a "chips" program. Shoppers who don't want to use or don't have cash on-hand can use debit cards, credit cards, EBT cards, or food stamps to purchase round chips with different values. The participating vendors—almost everyone at Cole Gardens—participate in the program for a minimal fee and accept the chips as payment, thus encouraging locals, who might not otherwise, to buy local products. In addition, Cole Gardens entertains shoppers with live music and has a wide variety of decorations and other trinkets for sale, including a flower arrangement of the week.

Now, under the law, a farmers' market specifically does not include "any event held upon any premises owned, leased, or otherwise controlled by any individual vendor selling therein." This means that a farm stand is its own kind of "event," which is defined as "an agricultural operation and not be considered commercial, provided that at least 35 percent of the product sales in dollar volume is attributable to products produced on the farm or farms of the stand owner." RSA 21:34-a, III.

Selling goods through a farm stand is a different approach that many farmers choose instead of participating in farmers' markets. Although the markets have their benefits, they are not the best option for all farmers. There are costs associated with participating in the markets, and a day at the market also means a day away from the farm and a day's work lost.

A farm stand is a practical and convenient option that brings customers directly to the farm. But they are not without their challenges: many farms lie beyond the beaten path and have low visibility that impacts the ability to attract new customers. Therefore, many towns have taken steps to remedy this issue, by allowing off-site signs to inform drivers of nearby farm stands, allowing road-side stands, and allowing farm stands to resell produce purchased elsewhere. (Matteson, Gary, *Is Your Town Farm Friendly?*)

Boscawen: Rooted in the Past, Keeping Agriculture in our Future

"Crops and critters," said Boscawen resident Bruce Crawford when asked about the current focus of the Boscawen Agricultural Commission.

For a small town with a 2013 population of under 4,000, agriculture and forestry are important to the town of Boscawen. As its website explains, "*We are a mix of the new and old here in Boscawen, as we still are thankful for our roots of agriculture and farming, but welcome new technology and the 21st Century as a way to move our town forward.*"

Twenty-four percent—or about 3,739 acres—of Boscawen's 24.9 square miles consists of active farms, orchards, and agricultural enterprises. Although the visual presence of the farm buildings, forests, pastures, croplands, and orchards are probably enough to prove that agriculture and forestry are truly essential to the character of Boscawen, the town also proclaims its support for agriculture to all who enter: at its five major entry points, Boscawen has proudly posted a sign: "Welcome to Boscawen, We Support Local Agriculture."

According to the town's master plan, in 2009, a group of volunteers, with

the support of the select board, took advantage of RSA 674:44-e and sent a warrant article to the floor of the town meeting to form the Boscawen Agricultural Commission Exploratory Group. After the article passed, this group—an advisory committee—began a discussion about the future of agriculture and forestry in Boscawen and the potential for forming an agricultural commission.

The committee's discussions were fruitful, and the Town of Boscawen Agricultural Commission was established by the town meeting in March 2010. The Agricultural Commission is an independent land use commission: it serves in an advisory capacity to the town's zoning board of adjustment, planning board, and conservation commission.

Although an advisory board, the Commission is active and influential in town, and has taken on numerous activities in support of the goals outlined in RSA 674:44-e: collaboration with other town departments, boards, and commissions; educating the public about a range of agricultural topics; offering citizens the opportunity to raise their own food; supporting local agricultural enterprises; and participating in the development of state and national policies related to agriculture.

The Commission supports local production that contributes to the local economy, and it promotes local planning that is sensitive to the needs of agricultural and forest production and that does not create roadblocks that could cause hardships or unintended consequences, such as increasing the cost of operation or decreasing competitive edge.

The Commission's collaboration with other land use boards is central to reaching its goals and has proved quite successful. At one point, the Commis-

AGRI-CULTURE *from page 19*

sion helped draft an ordinance that allows, by right, an individual to own up to 12 hens. In addition, it conducts site visits to applicants seeking special exceptions to raise horses, supplies recommendations to the zoning board regarding the definition of agriculturally-related terminology found in the zoning regulations, and gives practical advice about building placement and Best Management Practices (BMPs), including manure management. In fact, Chair John Keegan recalls, "Our Commission was instrumental in coming up with the definition of 'chicken' for use by our local boards."

The Commission is also in a special position to educate various boards so that agriculture can be better understood and integrated into the town. The agricultural commission has worked closely with the Cooperative Extension staff and Master Gardeners to present educational programs throughout the year, called the "First Monday" series. There have been approximately 250 attendees to the series, which consists of indoor lectures and outdoor "hands-on" workshops. Topics have included wood-lot management, back yard chickens, starting seeds, composting, food preservation, safer burning of wood for heat, putting your garden "to bed," high tunnels, low tunnels and greenhouses, history of barns in New Hampshire, and tool maintenance.

In 2010, the Agricultural Commission began working to get more Boscawen residents involved in agriculture through participation in a community garden. The endeavor came to life with support from the select board, the UNH Cooperative Extension Service, and local businesses, civic and religious groups, and other individuals. About 25 families and individuals cultivated 50 12' by 12' plots for their own use, with surplus or unattended produce donated to local food pantries. Crops include tomatoes, potatoes, corn, beans, cabbage, broccoli, peppers, onions, squash, cucumbers, peas, flowers, carrots, beets, chard, kale, eggplant, and numerous other edibles. The garden then received an upgrade: a dedicated water line with a hydrant along with an irrigation system, donated with the collaboration and support of the Penacook-Boscawen Water Precinct.

Not all the work being accomplished by Boscawen's Agricultural Commission is fun; in fact, some of it is downright dirty. For instance, the town is battling the invasion of the *Fallapia Japonica*, commonly known as Japanese knotweed. The Japanese knotweed is recognized as one of the world's worst invasive species, with a root system that can damage concrete foundations, buildings, roads, and other structures. The plant is resilient to cutting, so herbicide is the most effective method of eradication. Bittersweet is another

unwelcome Boscawen resident because it is a powerful, invasive species that engulfs other vegetation, slowly killing it. Yet another concern is the emerald ash borer, which was found in the capital city of Concord in March 2013. Don't be misled—it's no gem—this species attacks and infests ash trees, killing them within 3 to 5 years.

The Commission has accomplished quite a lot, but it continues to look towards the future and set goals that support and encourage agriculture. At the top of that list is establishing a community kitchen: a public space and approved facility licensed as a food manufacturer that may be used by local businesses for commercial purposes.

The Commission is currently exploring the feasibility of a community kitchen in Boscawen using a \$30,000 grant from the US Department of Agriculture. The proposed kitchen would have a far-reaching impact, serving all of Merrimack County and the greater Kearsarge Region. The feasibility study will explore the possibility of creating a community kitchen by (a) documenting need and interest for a facility to process foods; (b) identifying all potential development costs associated with the project; and (c) defining potential sources for financing and sustaining operations.

For more information on Boscawen's Agricultural Commission, visit the Town of Boscawen's website at

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www.townofboscawen.org/. You may also contact Bruce Crawford at atrasof-nh@gmail.com for any additional insight on how to establish an agricultural commission in your town or city.

Franklin: A Perma-nent Solution?

It looks like Franklin's downtown is in for a makeover. The palette? A variety of basic agricultural principles, blended into a new model for urban life. And it all starts with the concept of "permaculture."

Many have given the term "permaculture" a definition, but, after reading definition after definition, the concept remains somewhat ambiguous. As Todd Workman, catalyst of the Franklin makeover, explained, permaculture started in Australia and comes from the combined words "permanent," and "agriculture" or "culture." It's about "whole-system" design: a self-contained, self-sustaining system. Think about it: in nature, no one plants, waters, digs, or fertilizes; yet, plants grow and animals eat. In addition, nature doesn't produce waste; everything is used to feed or sustain another aspect of nature's system. This concept can easily be applied to agriculture. For example, instead of planting one crop, mix different crops together that will help each other thrive. Or, instead of buying fertilizer, let animals on the farm act as a natural fertilizer. These are very basic examples. And, although the concept was first applied to agriculture, it can be, and has been, applied in a multitude of settings.

Enter Workman, who has a clear vision for Franklin: a vision of urban permaculture, which is already being implemented in places like Canada, Scandinavia, England, and Seattle, WA. Because it's not just about agriculture—it's become a way of life.

Workman, a New Hampshire native with a background in finance and

economics, saw Franklin as a "diamond in the rough" and decided to take action. That meant tying up real estate in the downtown and negotiating sales on properties that weren't even for sale. He owns and leases about 10 or 12 properties and is working with other property owners. Now, he is looking for the right people and businesses to come in and make use of that real estate to create an urban permaculture or eco-village, called Franklin Falls and Odell Park. His vision is of a closed-loop or circular economy with zero waste, where restaurants in the downtown use local, raw ingredients, a food hub aggregates local farm commodities into one place for local food shopping, and businesses use local and natural power sources, such as solar hot air and water power from the rivers that run through the city. People will work at the businesses downtown and live nearby, allowing them to walk or bike to work, thus reducing cars and associated pollution. Workman's permaculture "charrette"—his initial plan—even proposes a ditch that captures and cleanses stormwater. And these are just a few of the many improvements Workman envisions for Franklin Falls. Interestingly, if Workman's plan progresses forward, the downtown will, in its basic premise, resemble historic Franklin, where large downtown factories were powered by water and residents could walk from their homes to their jobs on Main Street.

For Workman, permaculture is a "common-sense" solution. He believes that Franklin's downtown is underutilized and that a permaculture way of life will generate resilient and community-orientated ideas that will revitalize the historic Franklin downtown. Although Workman does not consider himself a permaculture expert, he is "permaculture certified," and his team includes individuals with a wide variety of backgrounds, particularly in energy-related fields, as well as support from the University of New Hampshire.

Workman believes that an urban permaculture will not only revitalize life for current residents but can also attract young people and entrepreneurs, who seek social, fun neighborhoods where they can live and work. He recognizes that he has a long road ahead of him, but he is enthusiastic and committed to making his "whole" vision come together.

And when you think about, isn't the basic premise of permaculture really the root all of agriculture? The land supports farms, farms support consumers, and consumers support farms. It's more than just an occupation or a consumer product; it's way of life.

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