

**Ad hoc Gully Hill Committee  
Meeting #2  
March 15, 2022  
DRAFT meeting minutes**

In attendance:

Committee: Councilor Jennifer Kretovic (Chair); Councilor Candace Bouchard; Councilor Stacy Brown

Staff: Deputy City Manager Carlos P. Baía; City Planner Heather Shank; Local Government Management Fellow Crayton Brubaker

*Meeting called to order at 5:30 p.m.*

Approval of the March 1, 2022 minutes

Councilor Bouchard moved approval. Councilor Brown seconded. Minutes approved unanimously.

Input from the Conservation Commission

Jeff Lewis and Jim Owers, members of the Concord Conservation Commission, addressed the committee. They explained that the Conservation Commission's position is that this farmland was acquired with Conservation Trust funds and they have consistently advocated that a conservation easement be placed on the property to preserve the agricultural use.

Mr. Owers noted that if some portion is planned to be pulled out of agriculture for another use that the Conservation Commission would like to have a legal opinion whether that is allowable. As to community gardens, the Commission representatives noted that their concern would be how such gardens would be managed and who would have that responsibility. If there were to be community gardens on a small portion of the property questions of access, parking, security, and separation from the commercial agricultural use would need to be clearly understood. The Commission has concerns about other uses near this land possibly compromising the intended use of the land acquisition.

Mr. Lewis stated that the Conservation Commission is fully supportive of the proposed MRGT but are concerned about additional recreational uses possibly using the area.

Mr. Owers noted that unless a longer-term lease is provided, he understands that no one in the farming industry will want to make a productive investment in the property.

Mr. Owers reiterated that there should be a 3<sup>rd</sup> party easement holder on this property.

Councilor Bouchard stated that she would support a longer term lease if it was for a farmer.

Councilor Kretovic asked if the City were to allow community gardens on a portion of this property, would 2 acres be appropriate. Mr. Lewis noted that it all depends on how such gardens were managed. If there were good management that accounted for the concerns noted by the Conservation Commission, perhaps it could be contemplated.

### Input from Current Tenant Farmers

Peter and Eric Glines, the current leaseholders for the Gully Hill property, addressed the committee. They explained that the property is a good piece of land. However, they noted that they have had challenges to date including traffic on the fields and homeless camps with related trash and debris. The Glines spoke of the improvements they have made to these fields over their tenancy.

Councilor Kretovic asked if the lease term is an impediment to further investment on their part. Peter Glines answered that it was to an extent. He noted that the longer the lease term, the safer a farmer would feel about making greater investments in the property. He noted that he and his brother would still be interested in another 5-year term.

Councilor Brown asked if the farmers used irrigation. They indicated that they do not and simply rely on rain. They noted that their crops don't require irrigation.

Councilor Brown asked how much corn the property can produce. Peter Glines noted that in a good year, it generates 27 tons per acre.

Councilor Brown asked about fertilization. Peter Glines noted that they apply 20-30 tons of manure per acre. Councilor Brown asked about the age of the manure. Peter Glines stated that it is from the current season.

Councilor Brown asked if they had issues with equipment on site. The Glines indicated that they have never had any problems with their equipment.

Councilor Brown stated that she is part of the Friends of the MRGT who are looking to host a triathlon. Would the farmers be OK with people biking around the property. Peter Glines noted that they have had some challenges with people on the river side. If those activities could be kept within the setbacks, it could be OK but they'd want to fully understand the details of the proposed use or event first.

### Public Comment

Rob Morrill, Concord resident and farmer, spoke to the value of agricultural products in today's marketplace noting that fruit trees, for example, would require a much longer term lease to recoup investment.

Rebecca Ross stated that she is a Concord resident and farmer. She also indicated that she is a member of the Merrimack County Farm Bureau Board of Directors and is proud that Concord has farmland within 5 miles of the State House.

Ms. Ross noted that in farming, everything is expensive. She stated that once you start sharing land uses with farmers, you increase the risk for the farmer. She was concerned with what impacts community gardens would have on an abutting commercial farm stemming from traffic to the site, pesticides that community gardeners might use that could impact nearby commercial farmers, etc. She was also worried about the impacts of community gardens on the local water supply. She noted that she would be concerned with debris from community garden plots, such as wind chimes, being blown into nearby commercial farming fields and damaging equipment.

Councilor Brown asked Ms. Ross what she would think if the City dedicated a portion of the land to education about farming. Ms. Ross expressed that she thought that was a great idea and something they do on her own farm. She noted that a lot of communities are installing sensory gardens.

Councilor Bouchard asked Ms. Ross what she would think of possibly taking 2 acres of land for a sensory garden. Ms. Ross stated that taking any land away from the plot that the Glines currently farm would be unfortunate.

Dot Currier stated that the pesticide cited by the tenant farmers in their testimony as what they use appears to be a form of "Roundup." She stated that she was concerned about this impact on any neighboring community garden. Ms. Currier also asked about the use of bio-solids. The Glines stated bio-solids had been used when they took over the lease but they have not used any in some time.

*Public comment was closed at this point.*

Councilor Bouchard stated that she would like to recommend a new lease with the current tenants.

Councilor Brown indicated that she would like to see staff examine a plan for community gardens on 2-3 acres of the Gully Hill property closest to the shopping center. She noted that community members that live less than a mile from this site have expressed interest in this and there is a bus line on Loudon Road. She also noted that the committee received input from an organization interested in managing such gardens.

Councilor Bouchard remarked that there are two apartment complexes with community gardens in the Heights area at Alton Woods and Salisbury Green. She did not feel that establishing community gardens at the Gully Hill property was appropriate based on the testimony she heard from the farming community.

Councilor Kretovic asked the committee what they would support relative to a lease term for the farmer. Councilor Brown stated that it should be a longer lease but still feels this is a good location for community gardens.

Councilor Bouchard suggested a longer lease with the Glines rather than issue a request for proposals (RFP). Councilor Brown stated that she was open to an RFP. Councilors Bouchard and Kretovic both stated that they did not favor an RFP although Councilor Kretovic noted that City Administration may have input on this issue once they review this matter.

Councilor Brown indicated that she would like to see an educational feature on the property. Councilors Bouchard and Kretovic agreed.

*Councilor Bouchard moved that the committee recommend that Council allow the Glines to enter into a new lease with the City for the Gully Hill property for a 5-year term with four 5-year renewal options. Councilor Kretovic seconded the motion. Motion passes 2-1 with Councilor Brown in the minority.*

*Councilor Bouchard moved that the committee encourage the City to explore signage consistent with downtown to be installed on the site to educate the public as well as recommending that the City seek out partners who could install an observation tower/deck on the property which could be used for*

*birdwatching and/or contemplation. Councilor Brown seconded this motion. Motion passes unanimously.*

*Meeting adjourned at 7:00 p.m.*

*Respectfully submitted,*

*Carlos P. Baía*