

## Peterborough Agricultural Commission Report 2019- 2020

***The Mission of the Peterborough Agricultural Commission shall be to protect agricultural lands, preserve rural character, provide a voice for farmers, encourage agricultural-based businesses and activities, and provide educational opportunities for home gardeners.***

In 2019, the committee created a checklist for farmers interested in leasing town-owned conservation land. We inventoried the Fremont Field to assess it for agricultural use. We found the agricultural field is now overgrown with a number of invasive species growing in the field area and along the borders such as autumn olive, buckthorn, multiflora rose, and Japanese barberry. Wild strawberry was present in most of the field, with visible sandy soil. Ground appears to be acidic and soil is depleted from being mowed down every year. This has also led to some erosion problems. There are quite a few solutions to restore the grazing portion, restore the soil, manage weeds and invasive species, encouraging more pollinators and native species, and utilize the property in a way that encourages agriculture and involves the community. Here are a few ways we could utilize agriculture to restore the land.

- **Regenerative Grazing:** Using animals on the property would fertilize, and manage growth of invasive plants. It would also improve the quality and PH of the soil and encourage growth of more desirable grasses and native flowers. Grazing would be more ideal than mowing because the animals would not leave any thatch that covers and reduces growth of grasses, while also replenishing the soil instead of depleting it over time.
- **Chickens:** Pasturing chickens provides excellent fertilizer for grasses. They also are really great tick eaters which would be beneficial in this area where ticks and lyme disease are very apparent.
- **Silvo-pasture:** A agroforestry method of intentionally combining trees, forage plants, and livestock together as a integrated, intensively managed system. This method of grazing sequesters more carbon back into the soil than grazing without trees and works well to manage invasive, tree, and pasture health.
- **Garden space/community garden:** There are a couple prime spots to put in a community garden or lease the space to a local farmer.

- Stockpiling/ winter grazing is a method to introduce organic material through the winter into the spring to give the soil a boost of nutrients.

In 2020, we are working on an educational initiative in collaboration with the Peterborough Elementary School. The program will host a farmer or farm related business person in Sept & Oct of 2020 and April, May & June of 2021 at PES. Farmers will give a presentation about their farm related activities with a Q & A session afterwards. Local farmers to present include Matt Gifford from Rosaly's Farm, Jake Lyons of Overlook Farm and Ruth & Dan Holmes of Four Winds Farm.

We have found this is the best way to reach out and educate our community about the importance of local food production and the wealth of opportunities for students and their families to grow their own food and/or support local farms and retailers.

Peterborough Agricultural Committee

Jake Lyons

James Kelly

Ruth Holmes

Savannah Steele

Mike Lombard

Alanna Johnson

Alexandra Walker