



## **Newton Community Farm, Inc. 2016 Business Plan**

**Submitted by:** **Newton Community Farm, Inc.**  
**303 Nahanton Street**  
**Newton, MA 02459**

**Submitted to:** **Newton Farm Commission**  
**City Hall**  
**1000 Commonwealth Avenue**  
**Newton, MA 02459**

**February 1, 2016**

## Table of Contents

<b>About Newton Community Farm, Inc.</b> .....	3
<b>Executive Summary</b> .....	5
<b>Farm Operations</b> .....	6
Research and Development (NCF Apple Orchard).....	8
Sustainability.....	8
Education.....	9
Events and Outreach.....	10
Barn Programming.....	10
Preservation.....	11
<b>Administration</b> .....	11
Communications.....	11
Board Affairs.....	12
Fundraising.....	12
Grants and Sponsorships.....	13
Budget Summary.....	14

## **About Newton Community Farm, Inc.**

In 2005, the City of Newton's Community Preservation Committee and Board of Aldermen voted to acquire the historic Angino farmstead, the last working farm in Newton, for use as a community farm. Newton Community Farm, Inc. (NCF) currently operates the Farm under a 20 year license from the City, with the guidance of the City's Farm Commission.

As a non-profit organization, NCF strives to benefit the community by:

- Providing locally grown produce to residents through a variety of distribution channels including:
  - an 80-share community-supported agriculture (CSA) program,
  - on-site farm stand,
  - weekly attendance at a City of Newton's Farmers' Market,
  - donations to local food pantries,
  - sales to local restaurants;
- Educating the public about the sustainable use of land and other natural resources through hands-on classes, workshops, and drop-in farm volunteer hours;
- Preserving Newton's only working farm as a historic site and valuable open space, and maintaining the character and culture of the Angino farm;
- Connecting gardening enthusiasts through events and networking opportunities.

## **Board Members**

Stephanie Cogen\* (President)  
Alex Ucciferri\* (Treasurer)  
Dede Vittori\* (Clerk)  
Howard Barnstone  
Peter Barrer  
Lisa Blacher

Eugene Finkelstein  
Craig Greiner  
Jon Orren  
Amy Roberts  
Douglas Whitaker

\* Executive Committee Member

## **Farm Staff**

Farm Manager  
Farm Educator/Coordinator  
Admin. & Events Coordinator

Greg Maslowe  
Alison Scorer  
*open*

## **Committees (Chair)**

Board Affairs	Stephanie Cogen
Buildings	Howard Barnstone/Peter Barrer
Communications	Craig Greiner
Education	Amy Roberts
Events	Stephanie Cogen
Farm Operations	Greg Maslowe
Finance	Alex Ucciferri
Fundraising	Craig Bouchard
Grants and Sponsorships	Lisa Blacher



## **Executive Summary**

Our 2015 year was a successful one in which many areas of the Farm saw growth, including in produce income, in the number of children served by our educational programming, and in the use of our newly-renovated barn. Highlights of 2015 include:

- Increased produce income over 2014 by the expansion of our fall CSA shares, more seedlings produced for the Seedling Sale, and effective use of season-extension techniques;
- Completion of barn renovation, including the installation of sprinklers and finalization of inspections, allowing us to move our office into the loft area;
- Use of the barn for community events (Newton Nomadic Theater production, BarnRaiser 2015) and for a number of private events, generating revenue for the Farm;
- Another successful, sold-out Dinner on the Farm, where we made a major improvement to sustainability by using dishes and silverware rather than disposable products;
- Creation of a new Board Chair position to focus on Grants and Corporate Sponsorships;
- New partnerships with private schools such as Temple Beth Avodah, where we provided five weeks of educational programming for middle schoolers, and the Fessenden School, where we presented a program to over 130 students, as well as continued and developing relationships with some of the Newton Public Schools;
- Completion of our new website;
- Purchase of a new truck to replace our 20-year-old vehicle, thereby saving maintenance and fuel costs and improving energy efficiency.

In 2016, we look forward to celebrating our 10th anniversary year with several events to bring the public to the Farm and to widening the community of people who actively benefit from what we offer.

We will continue some of the multi-year changes that were started in 2015:

- **Shift in Education Programming Strategy.** Due to consistent low enrollment and responses to an adult education survey, we will shift away from the traditional class model for adult education and focus on one-time events such as lectures and book talks to appeal to the adult demographic. At the same time, we will allocate more of our education resources to youth programming, where we have a more consistent audience and can deliver content more reliably.
- **Use of Barn as Community Resource.** As we offer more one-time events for adults in our newly-renovated barn, we will use it as a community center, introducing this wonderful space to a wider audience. Over time, we anticipate that the community will view our barn as a place to learn and connect through issues that are central to the Farm's mission.

- **Managerial Structure.** In 2015, the Farm Manager took on additional administrative duties, and we will continue to examine our staffing and managerial structure as we look for ways to improve efficiency. In addition, we will continue to explore a shift of more tasks to paid staff, away from the volunteer Board.

The increased productivity we have seen over a number of years is slowing as we reach the maximum amount the Farm can produce. But there are still improvements to be made, particularly around season extension. In 2016, we will add another high tunnel, which will allow us to grow more produce later in the season, thus enabling us to offer more shares of our late fall CSA.

Most of the major projects in our Capital Campaign have been completed. In 2015, the barn renovation was finalized, and we purchased a new truck. We have reduced the goals of the campaign by eliminating the project to screen in the porch, as the current Board does not feel this is a priority or a desirable change. In 2016, we will continue fundraising in anticipation of the renovation of the chicken coop in 2017, in addition to several smaller projects, and to replenish our capital reserves in preparation for any possible expenditures needed in the next few years.

Finally, in 2016 we are setting a goal to increase the size of our newsletter distribution list by 30%. We will look for ways to keep contact with people who demonstrate an interest in our produce, our education programs, or our mission. This will increase our impact on the community and broaden our fundraising base.



## Farm Operations

2015 was a year of weather extremes: we experienced a cold and snowy winter that lasted well into spring, followed by a hot and exceptionally dry summer with a record-setting hail storm. Despite these extremes, the Farm fared relatively well. No equipment was damaged, and produce distribution was not significantly delayed by the late arrival of spring.

One of 2015's notable highlights was the expansion of our Late Fall CSA. This relatively new market provides an important revenue stream late in the season when we still have crops to harvest but fewer outlets. In 2015 we were able to offer 41 shares, as compared to 30 in 2014. In 2016, we'll examine whether we can handle an even larger Late Fall CSA as we were able to sell out in 2015.

Another highlight was the \$3,900 grant NCF received from the National Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) to build another moveable high tunnel. This is the second high tunnel grant we have received from NRCS, and it will help us expand production for our Late Fall CSA and grow more tomatoes for the farm stand and farmers' market. In 2016, we will have three high tunnels to use for high value summer crops (tomatoes and cucumbers) and four high tunnels for growing winter greens (the three summer ones plus the one we use for seedling production from March to August).



2015 once again saw an increase in seedlings produced and sold at our annual Seedling Sale. While we are reaching the limits of what we can produce with our current heated space, we anticipate that electrical work will be completed by early spring 2016 that will allow us to increase sales at least modestly.

Our high school intern program benefits approximately 30 students during the summer, and we will continue this very popular program in 2016. We anticipate making changes that will more fully integrate the students into the farm work and reduce the amount of time our staff spends in orientation, while still ensuring that the students have an educational and fun experience.

Although our sales at the Elm Street Farmers' Market in West Newton did not grow as we had anticipated, it is a wonderful market, and we look forward to returning to it in 2016. We have a few ideas for how we might be able to increase sales, including capturing the market for cut greens, as there are currently no other farms selling that product.

In 2015, we were able to make weekly donations to two food safety organizations, the Newton Food

Pantry (located in Waban) and Second Step, which provides food and shelter to victims of domestic violence. In addition, we had one visit from the Boston Area Gleaners. We anticipate similar donations in 2016.

As we closed out 2015, we purchased a new truck for the Farm. Prior to this purchase, the newest truck in our fleet was 20 years old, so we are delighted to have a more reliable and fuel efficient truck.

In 2016, we will continue making changes to the Winchester Street entrance to the farm, after stabilizing the slope behind the farm stand in 2015. We will now finish planting this space and install a demonstration rain barrel irrigation system. We will also decrease the size of the compost pile on the south side of the Winchester Street entrance, clearing most of this area and converting it to additional growing space. We will maintain a much smaller compost pile, making it both more manageable and more useful as a teaching tool for home gardeners. This change does not mean any reduction in the amount of compost applied to the field, as this is a key part of our long-term soil management and a basic tenet of organic farming. We will continue our relationship with another local farm that produces compost for us.

With construction projects at the Farm drawing to a close, we have begun working on landscaping around the farm house and barn. There is now a perennial border and fruit tree in the front yard of the house and ornamental grasses along the driveway leading to the upper level of the barn. We will continue working to beautify the face of the Farm in 2016 with more plantings and a display of antique farm implements inside the barn.

## **Research and Development of NCF Orchard**

The apple harvest for 2015 was the largest since the orchard was planted in 2007 on land generously lent to NCF by our neighbors at Ledgebrook Condominiums; about 800 pounds of apples were harvested from 26 mature trees. In 2015, the following varieties were top producers, in *pounds per tree*: Honeycrisp (38), Empire (36), Liberty (30), Galarina (30), Crimson Topaz (27), Resi (19), Goldrush (15), Enterprise (15). The most popular were Honeycrisp, Crimson Topaz, and Liberty. Most of these apples were sold at the NCF farm stand on Winchester Street and at the Elm Street Farmers' Market.

Only 10% as much insecticide and fungicides were used compared to the amount typically used by conventional New England apple growers. The dry weather during the summer helped to reduce the need for fungicide.

Careful observations of and results from our 2015 harvest will guide our research and tree care goals for 2016. It is anticipated that the five younger trees (Liberty, Crimson Topaz, Crimson Crisp) will reach bearing age in 2016 and 2017. We hope to increase yield by pruning trees that are shading others, and will request the City to prune the Norway Maple on Nahanton Street. Also, we will remove two trees due to poor taste or lack of robust growth or yield.

## **Sustainability**



In 2015, the Board formed a Sustainability Committee to produce a NCF sustainability policy and to propose and implement practices to improve the sustainability of the Farm's operations and programs consistent with the Farm's mission. To help us achieve these goals, the Committee has selected a college-level intern to conduct a survey of current practices, research options for changes that will reduce our negative environmental impact, and recommend the highest priority changes. She will begin in January, and will complete a preliminary report by April.

In the interim, the Farm has already implemented several changes to improve sustainability. In 2015, the Dinner on the Farm used rented dishes and flatware, rather than paper and plastic, in order to reduce the amount of disposable materials. This worked well, and in 2016 we will continue to research pricing and storage and consider purchasing dishes for use for Farm events as well as look for ways to make the event yet more sustainable. At our large public events, such as the Fall Festival, we have encouraged attendees to separate recycling and compost from trash. In 2016, we will continue educating the public so that this process is accomplished more completely and successfully. We also plan to require participating vendors and organizations at public events to reduce the amount of disposable materials they bring to the Farm.



## **Education**

In 2016, the Education Coordinator will focus primarily on the continuing expansion of youth programming and partnership programs within the community. Less time will be spent on adult programming. This shift reflects a careful analysis of data gathered over several years relevant to the level of participation in both adult and youth programs compared to the investment of resources required to offer them. Our year-round Farm Sprouts program (four multi-week sessions), our summer programs for elementary and middle school aged children, and our year-round special programs (elementary early release day programming, cooking classes, programs for private groups) have served over 800 children, many of whom attended multiple sessions.

This past year, through partnerships with local schools, hundreds of children have been directly involved in educational programs offered by the Farm during offsite visits. For example, on one visit to The Fessenden School, 130 students learned about the Farm and its mission. NCF has been supporting the development of school gardens and providing programming that fosters a connection to the growing of food and its benefits. In addition, an expansion of programming offered in partnership with Temple Beth Avodah provides an exciting opportunity to further our mission in the local community. In 2015, new relationships were formed with programs within the Newton Public School system that support special needs children as well as with community organizations that provide similar services to young adults. In 2016, we will further explore, develop, and formalize these programs.

In 2016, we hope to expand upon these foundations as we welcome groups and schools to the Farm to gain firsthand experience of sustainable agriculture. We will continue developing curriculum and materials for use in public schools and for a new multi-week summer program, which we will provide in response to growing interest in our summer youth programs. Through the development and distribution of new promotional materials, we hope to raise awareness of programming we offer to local preschools. We will continue partnering with Kids Cooking Green, which provides students with the skills to prepare, cook, and enjoy wholesome meals. We also hope to expand our existing partnerships with Lasell College and Mt. Ida College.

## Events and Outreach

In 2016, NCF will again host three annual events that have been on our schedule in the recent past: the Seedling Sale, the Dinner on the Farm, and the Fall Festival. Each of these events fulfills a different purpose and benefits both the community and the farm in different ways.

- Our **Seedling Sale** supports home gardeners by giving them an opportunity to purchase their seedlings from their local farm and to seek out information and gardening advice from their local farm community. Last year we experimented with an advice table, which was well received, and we will do this again. In addition, this event is an important source of revenue for the Farm, bringing in approximately 9% of our income.
- **Dinner on the Farm** offers a farm-to-table experience, providing a lovely evening on the farm serving upscale food and alcohol for purchase. It is attended largely by an adult crowd that shares an affinity and connection to the Farm. This event has sold out several years in a row, and we will look to increase revenue from this very popular event, while providing the same enjoyable experience.
- The **Fall Festival** is our largest community event of the year, offering the public, particularly families with young children, a day to come and enjoy Newton's own farm. We provide music, food, farm tours, a judged pie contest, face-painting, family games, and other children's activities. We will continue to seek out additional partner organizations to participate in the festival and work to make sure that the community is well-informed of the event.

We are also exploring ideas for a 10<sup>th</sup> year anniversary event to take place in the Fall of 2016. We will form a committee, starting in January 2016, to plan and implement an event that uses this milestone to increase the Farm's profile, educate more people in the community on what we offer, and use the opportunity for fundraising.

## Barn Programming

We began holding events at the newly renovated barn in 2015 and will continue to expand our community program activities in 2016. In the spring of 2015, we hosted two University of Massachusetts Aggie Seminars on issues related to managing an apple orchard. In the summer, the Barn hosted two sold-out performances by the Newton Nomadic Theatre. We were also able to integrate the use of the barn space for several of our annual events, including the Dinner on the Farm and the Fall Festival.

Barn programming for 2016 is off to a great start. In April, the barn will host author Phil Warburg when he discusses his recent book *Harvest the Sun: America's Quest for a Solar Powered Future*. Tom Ashbrook, host of National Public Radio's *On Point*, will spend an evening in June at NCF to talk about growing up on a Midwest farm and other farm related topics. The Tom Ashbrook event will be part of NCF's 10<sup>th</sup> year anniversary celebration.

For private rentals, we will launch a birthday party offering that includes farm-related educational activities. Other private barn rentals will contribute funding to ongoing NCF operations. Our 2016 goals are to continue to offer programs in the barn that support our educational and community mission.

## Preservation

2015 saw the completion of our multi-year barn renovation project. Privately-raised funds were used to complete the loft level of the main barn, which provides office space for Farm staff and storage space for educational and event materials. A sprinkler system was installed that services all areas of the barn. Also using privately-raised funds, we constructed a storage shed for tractors and other fuel-using equipment in the former location of the old Angino “pullet shed”; the storage shed's design is similar to the old shed. An underground electric circuit was extended to the new shed and to the farm stand for lighting both buildings on dark afternoons and providing some night lighting along the path to the barn from Winchester St.



Our preservation needs for 2016 are few. We plan to install any needed additional lighting for the path from Winchester St. The 2016 budget also includes an allowance for unanticipated maintenance and repair expenses in the farmhouse, barn, farm stand, storage shed, and chicken coop.

## Administration

### Communications

In 2015, we unveiled the first major update of NCF's website; it is expected to be the foundation of our communications strategy for years to come. Over the course of 2016, we will continue to add content to the website and work on ways to refine existing information for optimum audience engagement.

Social media will remain a key part of our communications strategy in 2016. For the past few years, NCF has used Facebook and Twitter to publicize classes, programs, events and our farm stand, and 2015 saw the introduction of Instagram to our social media mix.

NCF enjoyed favorable coverage by local media outlets in 2015. Worthy of special mention is a feature article published in the *Boston Globe* (“Newton farmer mixes Agriculture, Marketing on the Job,” published on August 18) in which Greg Maslowe is interviewed about the job of a modern, urban farmer. A second feature article in the *Newton Tab* (“Looking Back, Sowing Seeds,” published on August 21) details the history of the Farm and its ongoing operations and includes interviews with Farm personnel and local leaders.

In 2016, we will continue to hone and sharpen the communications methods that have been successful in the past. Monthly newsletters during the growing season and year-round email updates on Farm events are sent via email directly to members. Increasing our newsletter subscription totals is a priority for 2016. Another priority is the development of a new physical brochure to communicate key information about the Farm.

A huge challenge our core communications strategy faces is the recent ban by the City of Newton on placing lawn signs on City-owned property. In the past, we have used lawn signs on City property to advertise events such as the spring Seedling Sale and the Fall Festival. We will explore alternatives and work-arounds to this policy over the course of 2016.

## **Board Affairs**

In 2016, the NCF Board will continue to recruit qualified candidates to serve on the Board, with a goal of ensuring a balance between institutional knowledge and new perspectives. 2016 will bring several significant turnovers in Board Directors. Peter Barrer, Board President for six years ending in February 2015, current Board member, and Preservation Chair, and Alex Ufficerri, Treasurer, will both come to the end of their terms in February 2016; the Board expects the transition to be smooth. The current President, Stephanie Cogen, has worked closely with Peter for over a year to ensure continuity as he leaves the Board. The Board Affairs Committee is in the process of reviewing several candidates for Treasurer and expects to have a qualified new Treasurer in place by February 2016.



The Board has added a new position, Chair of Grants and Sponsorships, held by new Board member Lisa Blacher. Lisa will focus on creating a formal sponsorship program and developing relationships and partnerships with businesses and organizations who are interested in supporting our mission.

The Board Affairs Committee, comprised of Stephanie Cogen, Dede Vittori, Howard Barnstone, and Peter Barrer, will continue to revise the rolling three-year plan, recruit new Directors where needed, organize and plan the Board Retreat, oversee Board nominations, and manage Board member participation.

## **Fundraising**

As of the end of 2015, our multi-year Capital Campaign has raised approximately \$162,800. To date we have completed the full renovation of the barn, complete with kitchen and loft office, replaced the old pullet shed with a functional and attractive storage structure, installed a produce cooler in the CSA bay, and purchased a new truck. Our updated goal is to raise a remaining \$90,000 to complete the following:

- Fund sustainability initiatives;
- Purchase a snow plow for the new truck;
- Establish a contingency to replace our shallow well with a deep artesian well;
- Rebuild the chicken coop;
- Restore Capital Account reserves (\$50,000)

In 2015, we prepared materials to communicate the scope and theme of our campaign, resulting in a formalized framework, *Sustaining Our Farm's Future*. Once our framework was established, we reached out to both past and new supporters with a variety of personalized cultivation and solicitation strategies, and we held another successful Barnraiser, this one in honor of Peter Barrer. This outreach has led to capital donations, getting us closer to our capital fundraising goal. In 2016, we will continue these personalized outreach efforts in the form of personal asks to farm supporters, house parties with interested groups, and potentially grants/corporate sponsorships to support our Capital Campaign. In addition, we plan to hold a tenth-year anniversary event, capitalizing on the milestone to inspire additional giving.

NCF continues our annual fund appeals in spring and fall to both established and prospective donors. These mail and email solicitations are the backbone of our annual fundraising. We will continue to educate ourselves on effective fundraising techniques and make changes to our strategies accordingly. In addition, we have made a goal of increasing our fundraising base by 30% in 2016.

## **Grants and Sponsorships**

In 2015 the Board established a Chair of Grants and Sponsorships to expand upon possible funding sources. As this effort is in its first year, there is a modest financial goal of \$4,000 for grants and sponsorships in 2016. However, we aim to use this year to build connections and lay a solid foundation for future fundraising.

With assistance from the Board, the Chair will research contact connections between the NCF Directors and local Newton and Needham businesses and other grantors, with the goal of establishing relationships to ensure corporate support and success with our grant applications. The Chair will also search for additional avenues of funding outside of foundation grants and traditional corporate sponsorships.



## **Budget Summary**

2016 will see the continuation of several changes in our offerings to the public that we expect will have a positive effect on the budget in coming years. First, we will see an even greater shift of our traditional education resources going toward youth programming, which has been the most successful aspect of our Education program. Adult programming will move away from the traditional class-model, and we will offer more one-time events aimed at adults, at a range of price points. This programming will be handled, not by our Education Coordinator, but by our Barn and Events Chairs, and the admin staff person. We anticipate that this new mix of programming will increase the number of people reached, grow our income from both youth and adult programming, and expand our fundraising base.

Second, we will continue to offer the Barn for use by other non-profits, community groups, corporations, and private individuals for different types of events. This will increase NCF's profile in the community, generating interest in our programs, and bringing in additional income from rentals. Use of the Barn picked up in the fall of 2015, and we expect that interest will be even greater in 2016.

For 2016, we foresee growth in income in several areas. Farm Ops income is expected to increase through increasing the number of Late Fall CSA shares, fruit shares, and a nominal increase in CSA price. Education program income is also expected to increase as we anticipate greater enrollment in our youth programs, and more interest in our curricula available to private groups. We also will be seeking out corporate sponsorships and grants, with the help of a new Board position focused on those sources of income. Finally, income from use of the Barn will likely be higher in 2016.

We will see some increases in expenses in staffing, due to appropriate raises, and for increased use of admin support for adult programming and management of barn usage and rentals. In addition, we will see the usual increase in costs of goods and services.

For 2016, we present a budget with a slight surplus, before accounting for \$16,000 annual depreciation expense.