

**2019 ANNUAL REPORT AND  
2020 BUSINESS PLAN**

**NEWTON  
COMMUNITY  
FARM**



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

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## ABOUT NEWTON COMMUNITY FARM, INC.

In 2005, the City of Newton acquired the historic Angino farmstead, the last working farm in Newton, for use as a community farm. Community Preservation Act funds were used to buy the farm with a conservation restriction held by Newton Conservators. Newton Community Farm, Inc. (NCF) operates the farm under a 20-year license from the City with the guidance of the City's Farm Commission. The current license expires March 2, 2031.

### **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:
  - weekly attendance at a City of Newton Farmers' Market;
  - on-site farm stand;
  - an 80-share summer community-supported agriculture (CSA) program and a 40-share late fall CSA;
  - donations to local food pantries and other organizations that provide food to people in need;
  - sales to local restaurants;
- Educating the public about the sustainable use of land and other natural resources through hands-on classes, summer camp, workshops, and fieldwork volunteer hours;
- Preserving Newton's only working farm as a historic site and valuable open space, while maintaining the character and culture of the Angino farm;
- Providing seedlings for gardeners through our annual Seedling Sale
- Establishing connections with the community by offering a variety of events to appeal to different populations and encouraging people to learn about and support the Farm's mission.

## **BOARD MEMBERS**

Stephanie Cogen\* (President)

Barbara Seal\* (Treasurer)

Robin Maltz\* (Clerk)

Craig Greiner

Paul Holt

Marietta Joseph

Lisa Schumann

\*Executive Committee Member

## **FARM STAFF**

**Executive Director**

- Sue Bottino

**Farm Manager**

- Greg Maslowe

**Director of Education**

- Reva Haselkorn

**Operations, Communications and Events Manager**

- Jay Vilar

**2019 was a very successful year at the farm. Over 2,000 people visited to buy produce, participate in educational programs and attend events.**

## **FARM OPERATIONS**

- Demand for our produce continues to grow and we sold out both the summer and late fall CSAs. Our farm stand and farmers' market offerings were very popular and we continued our practice of donating \$10,000 in produce to charitable nonprofit organizations. We also made available additional items from other local farms (eggs, corn, squash, pumpkins, fruit and other items) and we sold produce to local restaurants.

## **EDUCATION PROGRAMS**

- We expanded our educational offerings in 2019. With the addition of our Farm Babies program for children under 2.5 years old with their caregivers, we now offer classes for all ages. We continued Farm Sprouts and Farm Tuesdays for kids. Cooking classes were added this year including seasonal pasta classes, cookbook potluck dinners, and family baking. We ran a school spring vacation camp for several days in April. Our very successful summer camp was almost sold out and we had a tremendous increase in enrollment over previous years. Our on-site visits from local groups as well as off-site workshops have increased in number.

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

Farm Manager Greg Maslowe once again grew a tremendous bounty of fresh, healthy vegetables while using sustainable agricultural practices. Director of Education Reva Haselkorn coordinated and ran an unprecedented number of educational offerings and expanded our reach both at the farm and into the community. Our annual events were hugely successful and we added two free picnic and music concerts to bookend the harvest season.

After a successful year as the Farm's first Executive Director, Karyn Novakowski made the decision to step down from this role due to family responsibilities. The Board opted to replace her with an Interim Executive Director, and selected Sue Bottino, a former Board Member and President-Elect to the Board, who has a background in environmental economics and is an active volunteer in the Newton community. She began the position in August 2019, and was promoted to Executive Director in November. We experienced a smooth transition, as Karyn stayed on in a support role for several months. In October, we hired Jay Vilar as our part-time, year-round Operations, Communications and Events Manager. Jay is a communications professional, nutrition expert, volunteer coordinator and event planner.



## GOALS for 2020

### Goal 1: Increase visibility

Improve name recognition in the community. We will create a brochure, implement more far-reaching publicity for our events, programs and the farm in general, explore radio and community television opportunities, and expand our merchandise offerings.

### Goal 2: Increase community engagement at the farm

Provide more opportunities for the community to become involved in the Farm. For example, we will explore the potential for nutrition classes, another event, and increasing enrollment in our current programs.

### Goal 3: Create more opportunities to partner with nonprofits, for-profits and the City of Newton

We will have an increased presence at local events held by organizations with missions similar to ours. We will look for ways to share resources with other groups, such as Green Newton and the Newton-Needham Chamber of Commerce. We will explore how we can offer volunteer opportunities to corporations and others who want to come to the Farm. We will assess partnerships with the City, including the potential for having interns from the City internship program.

### Goal 4: Improve our financial position

We will continue to grow our relationships with donors, potential donors, businesses and companies. We will more actively look for corporate sponsors and apply for grants.

## FARM OPERATIONS

Both summer and late fall CSA programs sold out in 2019.

Weather was a significant factor in the 2019 growing season. The cold, wet spring caused late planting which resulted in a one-week delay in the start of our Summer CSA program. This was followed by the hottest July on record and then an early frost in September. While neither of the latter caused too many problems, they do highlight the need to adapt to changing environmental conditions. This is true for both workers and crops, both of which can be negatively affected by heat indexes over 100°.



Farm stand sales were steady, although we faced some obstacles, such as late opening (due to weather), roadwork on Nahanton Street and some labor issues. It appears that roadwork is now complete, though the planned 5-year redevelopment of Needham Street may again cause congestion in this part of Newton. In terms of labor, we are considering the benefits of a single farm stand worker (convenience) versus multiple workers (more options if someone is sick).

Our CSA programs continued to show strong popularity in 2019. The only person on the 2018 Summer CSA waitlist received a share in 2019. Our current waitlist has two individuals and they will be offered shares in 2020. We sold almost 50% more Fruit Shares and our Late Fall CSA enrollment had an increase of 30% and filled to capacity. We are currently gathering survey results from our Summer CSA program, but thus far the responses have been favorable (59% of respondents "Loved it" and another 26% were "Happy" for a total of 85%). One consistent piece of feedback is that participants would like an increase in the diversity of our crop offerings. This will be a goal for 2020.

Once again, we did well at the Elm Street Farmers' Market, with revenues above budget projections. The market as a whole seems to be growing, and we have developed a strong customer base, including many residents who switch to our onsite farm stand after the farmers' market closes for the year.

## FARM OPERATIONS



In 2020 we will continue to improve weed management, a constant struggle for most farms. We have shifted away from most long-season brassica crops and continue to use lime to control club root in those that remain. This two-pronged strategy seems to be working as we experienced very little problems with club root, a problem we have been dealing with since 2017, and our customers seem to have accepted the shift away from crops like broccoli and cabbage.

We will continue to try and expand our no- and low-till practices to improve soil health. We already have very healthy soil. We began experimenting with using tarps to kill cover crops in the spring of 2019 and had great success, so we will build on this in the spring of 2020. Not only is this method of killing cover crops better for the soil, but it also saves both labor and fuel.

We completed construction of a new high tunnel in 2019. The tunnel was used for eggplant and sweet pepper production during the summer and for spinach and lettuce for the winter. We look forward to having this new tunnel next spring to help streamline the process for preparing 20,000+ seedlings for the Seedling Sale.

The Farm Operations Committee will be focusing on analyzing farm stand sales over the winter to examine trends and explore how we might improve sales in 2020.

Our long-time volunteer (and former board member) Sam Fogel announced in the spring of 2018 that he would no longer be able to maintain the orchard. We found another volunteer to do some pruning and keep the grass beneath the trees mowed, but the orchard did not receive the expert care it had under Sam's leadership and shows the effects. It is not economically viable for the Farm Operations staff to maintain the orchard because it is simply too small for the work required to be offset by fruit sales, and we have not found another long-term volunteer who has both the time and the necessary knowledge to maintain the orchard properly. The Farm is currently considering the future of the orchard. This decision will involve our neighbors at Ledgebrook as the land on which the orchard was established is owned by Ledgebrook.



## EDUCATION

**2019 has been a very strong year for education programs at NCF.**

2019 has been a very strong year for education programs at NCF. It was the first full year for Director of Education Reva Haselkorn and existing programs benefited from the consistency of planning and previous experience. We were able to pilot several new programs with great success. Overall, net revenue increased by over 100%. We strengthened our collaborations and initiated new partnerships with local public and private schools and community groups.



We hosted group visits and offered off-site instruction to engage with nearly 600 participants. In 2020, we plan to invite all visiting groups from 2019 to return for multiple visits during different times of year to allow for hands-on learning about the cycles of change at the Farm. We are also pursuing new partners who would like the Farm brought to them, especially during the winter and early spring when programming at the Farm proves more difficult.

We also had great success with our on-site youth programs including summer camp for ages 3-14, summer high school internship program, early childhood programs, after-school elementary school programs and adult & family programs. Our Summer Camp "Kids at the Farm" was nearly sold out. We received a camp license from the City for the third year, demonstrating that we employ best practices and provide a safe and impactful experience for campers. We added a new garden specialist position and increased staff training. Our high school internship program brought new and returning interns and former campers and we added a formal Intern Lunch with the director.

In 2020, we plan to maintain the general structure of our summer camp, expand the garden specialist role and create a more targeted recruitment plan for our high school internship program.

## EDUCATION



For our scholarship fund, we again received a generous grant from the Charles River Neighborhood Foundation. We added to this fund with an online registration scholarship donation option and the proceeds from produce grown in the Learning Garden and sold at our kids' farmstand during summer camp. We granted six scholarships amounting to just under \$3,000 to two returning and four new families. In 2020, we plan to seek additional grant funding as well as continuing registration add-on donations and our kids' farmstand.

We offered a new program this year, Farm Babies, in addition to our successful Farm Sprouts program for toddlers and it was well-received. In 2020, we look to replicate the success of our summer early childhood programs in spring and fall with more publicity and better brand recognition.

After school programs for elementary-aged youth ran in both spring and fall. We also added a new April vacation week program. In 2020, we will again offer these programs in a combination of open registration and partnerships with local organizations.

We added several new programs for adults and families. Two free public concerts were held at the farm with approximately 125 people in attendance combined. We ran family baking workshops, adult seasonal handmade pasta classes, and an adult gardening series. The farm hosted cookbook-themed potluck dinners, an on-site historic walking tour, and a Halloween event. In 2020, we plan to offer these programs again and explore additional programs.



## ADMINISTRATION

**Our Fall Festival was particularly successful from a sustainability perspective.**

### EVENTS AND OUTREACH

Our three annual events (Seedling Sale, Dinner on the Farm, and Fall Festival) were well-attended and brought over 2,000 visitors to the farm.

The Seedling Sale ran similarly to last year with farm-grown seedlings and compost available for purchase. We had an "Ask the Expert" table staffed by volunteers that was popular. This year, the food for Dinner on the Farm was prepared and served by a professional catering company, sponsored by The Village Bank, and we used donated tents as protection from predicted rain storms. We also procured sponsorships from several small area businesses.

Our Fall Festival was particularly successful from a sustainability perspective, with a new low-waste event policy. We selected the food and drink containers so that we could compost or recycle as much as possible. Volunteers helped people sort their waste items as compost, recycling, or trash. At the end of the day, 800 people produced only eight pounds of trash. We also collected 22 pounds of compost and 21 pounds of recycling. Guests learned about how important composting and recycling are to Newton Community Farm and to the environment as we improve the sustainability of all Farm activities. Newton Sustainable Materials Management Division loaned us ClearStream recycling and trash collection bins, bags, and brochures and picked up the recycling and trash generated by the event. Black Earth Compost collected our compost free of charge.



## ADMINISTRATION

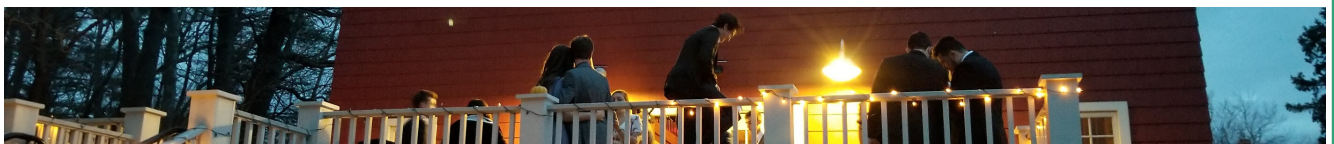
### For 2020, we are considering the following opportunities for change

- For the Seedling Sale, we plan to slightly increase the price for one type/size of seedling offered; better execute our pre-order program; discontinue the early season Seedling Sale in April, and complement our offerings with at least one more collateral item to sell.
- For Dinner on the Farm, we will again hire a professional caterer (and work to find a less-expensive option) and include more farm produce on the menu.
- We will continue the success of the Fall Festival while exploring options for food service and fundraising at the event. We will simplify customer payment options and consider adding more activities/fundraising opportunities. We are also considering running the festival one hour longer.

### BARN USE

We had approximately 27 barn rental inquiries and we rented the barn six times. Rentals included private parties, a private school information session, a wellness workshop, a public lecture, and meditation group. We also hired outside helpers as needed to staff the rentals.

Plans for 2020 include revising our marketing materials and advertising the space for corporate off-site meeting or retreat space. Our new Operations, Communications and Events Manager will oversee this program.



# ADMINISTRATION



## BUILDING PRESERVATION AND MAINTENANCE

In 2019, we continued routine maintenance on the buildings. We initiated tree trimming on several large oak and hickory trees that were overhanging the property and we replaced a burst pipe in the CSA bay.

We have notified the City that the roofing material on the flat roofs of the farmhouse needs to be replaced. Prior to NCF taking occupancy of the farmhouse, these sections of the roof were covered with asphalt shingles, which are not appropriate due to the pitch of the roof. Water is not sloughing off the roof surface so the shingles are sitting in water. Water is also accumulating at the edges of the roof around the flashing.

The chicken run fence was replaced with a taller, stronger fence that also goes underground so that it will better protect the chickens from predation. We ran a 3-week fundraiser, "Spring for the Chickens" which had more than 80 contributors and raised approximately \$8,200 for this effort.



## ADMINISTRATION

Our November newsletter had a 45% open rate, the highest of the year and higher than industry standards.

## COMMUNICATIONS

In 2019, we started producing our monthly newsletter **The Newton Farmer** year-round. Our November newsletter had a 45% "open" rate, the highest of the year and much higher than industry standards for emailed newsletters. We plan to keep providing quality content and beautiful photos to keep the Farm on the radar of our supporters and to increase our visibility all year.

We also continue to increase our social media presence and our number of followers on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter has grown.



### The Newton Farmer November 2019



What an amazing end to the season. The last week of our Summer CSA had sunny temperatures in the 60s. Cool, crisp rain, just the right amount of rain. Not too much rain. A season that started off with a cold, we delayed planting, followed by the hottest record, and then frost in September! We responded to the beautiful, mild autumn with abundant production, even with the demand more than their share.

We recently watched *Won't You Be My Neighbor?* the documentary about Mr. Rogers' life. Toward the end of the film, Mr. Rogers' reference to the Jewish concept of *tikkun olam*, which he translates as working to repair what was struck by this phrase, working to create. Are we working to repair our

In the past about Elliot Coleman's distinction between "shallow" and "deep" soil. I think that Mr. Rogers' interpretation of *tikkun olam* brings us back to what inspired the organic movement in the first place: feeding ourselves

We are continuing to update and improve our database management and our email and mailing lists are growing. In 2020 we plan to upgrade our Customer Relationship Management (CRM) software which will enable us to segment our database more effectively for fundraising, run more informative reports, and automate more pieces of our program registration process.

We also represented the Farm at community events and through public speaking. Examples of this include tabling at Green Newton's Green Expo and the Newton Family Singers' 10th Anniversary Concert as well as speaking at a meeting of local Sotheby's realtors and at the annual Ledgebrook Condominiums meeting.

## ADMINISTRATION

## FUNDRAISING

Individual donations totaled just over \$50,000, similar to last year. We have started a For Our Future campaign to solicit pledges for larger donations over multiple years. In 2019, we had \$5,000 in contributions to this campaign and we will be working to grow this initiative in 2020. Also in 2019, we developed a corporate sponsorship program which brought in over \$14,000. Of this amount, \$10,000 was from The Village Bank to sponsor the catering expense for Dinner on the Farm. We plan to add a fundraising event in 2020 and apply for more grants.

## BOARD AFFAIRS

2019 was a relatively stable year for our Board membership, with few changes. As Sue Bottino shifted from Board Member to Interim Executive Director in August, we welcomed Paul Holt to the Board. Paul is a retired fundraising professional and business-owner.

The Board is exploring the possibility of adding more members and has been discussing potential candidates. The Board Affairs Committee also will develop a succession plan for President Stephanie Cogen, who has only one year left on the Board.

