

AGRICULTURE COMMISSION

Meeting Minutes
7:00 P.M., Tuesday, March 16, 2010
3rd Floor Meeting Room, TOWN HALL

Present

Members: Warren Herzig, Melissa Greenbacker, Richard Porter, Vivian Caturano, and Roger Passavant

Alternates: Joe Pasquale and Fred Mastele.

Absent

Alternate Geraldine Lombard,

1. The meeting was called to order by Warren Herzig, Chairman, at 7:00 pm, roll call was taken. Absent was Alternate Geraldine Lombard.
2. A motion was made by Melissa Greenbacker and seconded by Richard Porter to accept the March 16, 2010 meeting agenda as presented. Approved unanimously.
3. A motion was made by Richard Porter and seconded by Vivian Caturano to accept the minutes for the January 19, 2010 regular meeting, and special meeting held January 30, 2010. Approved unanimously.
4. Old Business:

Right to Farm

Amy Stegall, President of the Connecticut Horse Council, addressed the Commission to provide the background and history of some of the "Right to Farm" ordinances that have been enacted in towns such as Pomfret, Oxford, Stonington and Woodstock. Most are patterned after the Connecticut "Right to Farm" regulations.

Following Ms. Stegall's presentation, there was a discussion of the pros and cons of a "Right to Farm" ordinance and how it could impact the Town of Durham. It was suggested that the DAC meet with the other Boards and Commissions to get input into their perception of agriculture and how a "Right to Farm" ordinance would impact them. Ms. Stegall also reminded the Commission that Connecticut continues to lose farmland and that we are not building farms.

The question was raised by several Commission members about the signs that it was told are to be posted at the Town lines stating that Durham is friendly to agriculture. Warren Herzig and Roger Passavant said they would be willing to check on the status of the signs.

Agriculture Inventory

The Commission has been working on gathering information regarding agricultural uses in the Town and those persons preparing the maps and spread sheets reported on their progress.

It was determined that there were a few more things that needed to be completed and there was a discussion about the way to present the information in the spreadsheet. It was decided to review the status of the inventory again at the April meeting before finalizing.

5. New Business:

Code of Ethics and Acknowledgement Forms

Warren Herzig informed the Commission that he had received the Code of Ethics Forms from Kim Garvis for the Durham Agriculture Commission (DAC) members to sign. The forms were signed by those present and returned to Warren.

Conservation Commission Request

Warren informed the Commission that Casey Cordes had resigned as Chairman of the Conservation Commission. Also, that the Conservation Commission requested the DAC members attend its April 13, 2010 meeting to discuss ways our Commission could assist them with some of their projects, etc.

Following a brief discussion, several of the DAC members said they would attend the meeting to see what the Conservation commission proposes. However, it was determined that due to our budget constraints that the Commission should proceed with caution as to what we may/might be asked to undertake.

Meeting Agricultural Operators and Landowners

It was suggested at a previous meeting that it would be a good idea if the Commission members visited the agricultural businesses and landowners to introduce the DAC to them. Warren suggested that we should pursue this and asked for input from the Commission members regarding our thoughts.

Following a brief discussion it was decided that it should be a simple visit (5 minutes or less) by no more than two members. It was suggested that we do it in the late spring or early summer, which would give us time to come up with some questions we could ask. This will be discussed at future meetings.

Farm Viability Grant Program for Municipalities

Warren Herzig informed the Commission that he had done some research and found that there is still grant money available through the Viability Grant Program and he thought the deadline was October 31, 2010. There was a discussion about obtaining a grant and several possibilities were mentioned including White's Farm and the placement of the agricultural friendly sign. The grants require 50/50 matching funds by the Town. Warren will check to see if we can find someone to help write a grant and whether there are matching funds available to pursue a grant.

7. Public Comment

Durham Resident Sue White commented that she was glad the signs were brought up because it was a concern of hers also. She also stated that she thought the Conservation Commission had some information regarding the size of open space parcels and farmland. There was a discussion of the percentage of open space we have in Town and the concern that it be maintained.

Mellissa Greenbacker gave a brief report on proposed legislation. She stated that the State was looking at regulations for water furnaces and that some agricultural funding is being targeted for reduction. She also announced that Ag Day at the Capitol is March 18, 2010.

Joe Pasquale commented that he had visited the Town of Woodstock web site and that they had agricultural businesses, products, etc. listed that are grown and sold there. Joe suggested that this might be something that the DAC and Town might want to consider. The consensus was that we should have something similar on the Durham web site.

7. A motion to adjourn was made by Melissa Greenbacker and seconded by Vivian Caturano and the meeting was adjourned at 9:00 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Frederick J. Mastele