

*Public Hearing*

*8:00 p.m., Monday, May 18, 2009*

*3<sup>rd</sup> Floor Meeting Room, Town Hall*

*The purpose of this public hearing is to present information and discuss proposed Agriculture Commission Ordinance and to provide an opportunity for public comment.*

Minutes

L. Francis called the meeting to order at 8:00 p.m. and led with the pledge of allegiance. John Szewczyk and James McLaughlin present.

L. Francis invited Joan Nichols of the Connecticut Farm Bureau to speak on her experience with Agriculture Commissions.

J. Nichols stated that there are small but growing numbers of Agriculture Commissions in Ct; she has worked with Guilford, North Branford and the Town of Old Lyme. Basically she has found that the benefits of an Agriculture Commission are professionals who are very well educated in the field and have a vested interest. They work very well on farmland preservation and grant funding. She has found that towns who have developed an Agriculture Commission are helpful, regulatory not advisory, when it comes to related conflicts of town regulations or requests coming before different commissions. She suggested holding informal round table discussions with representatives from town committees and commissions. L. Francis commented she thought another benefit of having a commission would be to bring all of the towns' agriculture entities together as they haven't had an organized network before to do so.

Susan White a Durham resident stated she felt the town has been complacent on agriculture in the past and being able to buy local was not only cheaper but the product would be fresher. She supports an Agriculture Commission.

L. Francis stated the ordinance would need to be passed at a Special Town Meeting sometime at the end of June.

J. Szewczyk questioned the ordinances membership language and the validity of the word "shall" constitute cause, asking if the word "may" should be substituted; he felt this should be on a case to case basis and to leave it up to the Board of Selectmen's discretion. L. Francis talked about recent requests from other committees/commissions on this exact subject. J. McLaughlin stated often times this leads to not having a quorum and suggested adding the word "consider".

It was agreed that the ordinance would state the following under membership: "The failure of a voting member to attend four (4) consecutive meetings of the commission shall constitute cause for the Board of Selectmen to consider removal of the member and fill the position thus vacated."

Dick Porter stated he felt this ordinance was long overdue.

J. Szewczyk echoed Sue White saying this should not be something from the past and should continue.

Meeting adjourned at 8:20 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Beth Moncata