



**MINUTES
AGRICULTURAL COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING
July 9, 2024
7:00 PM - ENFIELD ROOM**

1. CALL TO ORDER

Chair LaPlante called the meeting to order at 7:01pm.

2. ROLL CALL

Present: William Paul Cote, Karen LaPlante, Gretchen Pfeifer-Hall, Kathleen Vose

Absent: Michael Dynia , Nancy Wyzga

Also present was Recording Secretary; Rebecca Jones.

3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A. June 11, 2024

MOTION by: Gretchen Pfeifer-Hall **seconded:** William Cote to approve the June 11, 2024 as corrected to change typo on page 2 to "move".

UPON A SHOW OF HANDS VOTE, the Chair declared the motion approved. Yes: William Cote, Karen LaPlante, Gretchen Pfeifer-Hall, Kathleen Vose No: None Abstain: None.

4. PUBLIC HEARINGS

None.

5. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

None.

6. CORRESPONDENCE/STAFF REPORT

Commissioner Pfeifer-Hall shared an article about BIPOC farmers in Connecticut. There is a grant program for community land trusts and nonprofit organizations that acquire, hold and maintain land may separate ownership of land from ownership of structures or improvements on the land through a ground lease, that gives the leaseholder the right to farm the land. Most of the lots are between 5,000 and 10,000 sq ft and the grant is up to \$50,000. She noted that the Town of Enfield could consider doing this with the current open space parcels. Chair LaPlante opined that the Shaker lot would be ideal for farming. This would provide more space than community gardens. There was discussion about including veterans in this program. The commissioners discussed the possibility of hydroponic farming as well. Commissioner Cote has an upcoming meeting with Aaron Marcavitch, Community Development Director and will discuss this grant with him. There must be a plan and need before preparing the land for farming. Enfield residents would receive priority in

applying, but it could be open to people from out of town.

7. APPROVAL OF INVOICES/OTHER FINANCIAL MATTERS

None.

8. REPORTS OF OFFICERS, COMMITTEES AND STAFF

Chair LaPlante received a list of 490 properties from Georgienna Driver, Assistant Town Planner. Chair LaPlante explained the list didn't include specific data, so she proceeded to transfer as much relatable information from an older spreadsheet given to her by a former Town of Enfield employee to create a new spreadsheet. She was specifically looking for the owner's name and the acres of each parcel. Chair LaPlante added up the acreage, and it totals over 5,000 acres; which she feel is very high. This also includes open space and all other 490 approved properties. Other classified land such as Tillable A, B, C, woodlands, pastures and orchards are all grouped together making it impossible for her to differentiate the data received. She has a list of people who have put their properties under 490 and who may be interested in farmland preservation or open space. This list is a good starting place to explore further. Commissioner Cote explained that this must be discussed with leadership, particularly the Town Manager. He suggested creating a working document and explained that there are drop-down options on the list received that give more data. The commissioners discussed contacting the Town Assessor to gather more accurate data in order to pin down those that qualify for farmland preservation.

9. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

A. Farm Friendly Zoning Regulations

Chair LaPlante created a document to highlight proposed zoning regulation changes in different parts of the regulations. All changes are highlighted in green. She also included all definitions that mention farming. She made another spreadsheet using three other towns' definitions for farming and agricultural uses. The commissioners discussed the definition of farmers markets and farm stands. Chair LaPlante directed the commissioners to take copies of the documents, review the changes, make notes and prepare to have comments ready for September should the PZC begin to hold public hearings on these changes. Changes to special permits and site plans and their relevance to farming were discussed. Chair LaPlante plans to send some of these changes to local farmers for comment. She liked that there is a farmland preservation zone in Suffield, and it limits what is allowed in that zone. She noted there is nothing in Enfield's regulations related to cow farming. She recommended that all farming and agricultural regulations be put in their own section. Commissioner Cote recommended that Chair LaPlante share her findings with Councilor Ludwick and possibly invite him to the next meeting to discuss them further. Chair LaPlante will also send a copy to Commissioner Wyzga for review.

B. Update on Tax Abatement Ordinances

Commissioner Ludwick requested that this be added to the July 15, 2024 Town Council agenda. He is unsure if it made it onto the agenda yet.

C. Solar Farm - 141 Town Farm Road - Siting Council Hearing Update

The next hearing will be in August.

D. List of priority parcels for Community Farmland Preservation

Chair LaPlante recommended starting with the list of 490 parcels discussed earlier in the meeting and work from there.

10. NEW BUSINESS

None.

11. DATE OF NEXT REGULAR MEETING

A. September 10, 2024

12. ADJOURNMENT

MOTION by: William Cote, seconded: Kathleen Vose to adjourn.

Upon a **SHOW-OF-HANDS** vote being taken, the Chair declared the motion adopted unanimously, and the meeting stood adjourned at 8:16 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Kathleen Vose
Secretary

Rebecca Jones
Recording Secretary