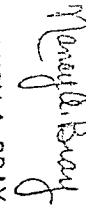


Colchester Agriculture Commission
Minutes of Meeting
Monday, August 20, 2012 - 7:00 P.M.
Town Hall, Room 3

HANCY A. BRAY
TOWN CLERK



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Attending: L.Curtis, E.Gillman, A.Savitsky, D.Wasniewski,
A.Lyon (Alternate) and J.Savitsky (Alternate)

Absent: J.Becker

Liaisons attending: A. Turner (Town Planner) , S.Soby (Board of Selectmen, arrived at 7:38),
C.Bourque (New London County Farm Bureau)

1. Call to Order:

Meeting was called to order by Chairman E.Gillman at 7:01 P.M. (Note: D. Wasniewski arrived at 7:03.)

2. Additions to Agenda:

MOTION: A.Lyons moved to add a discussion of the future plans for the Colchester Farmers' Market to the agenda under 7a New Business. A.Savitsky seconded. There was no discussion and the motion passed unanimously.

3. Approve Minutes of the Agricultural Commission on July 16, 2012:

MOTION: A.Savitsky moved that the minutes be approved as submitted. D. Wasniewski seconded. There was no discussion and the motion was unanimously approved.

4. Citizen's Comments.

None.

5. Chairman's Report:

Chairman Gillman stated that it was her hope that the primary focus of this meeting was to be on the discussion of the principles laid out in the document entitled "Guidance & Recommendations for Connecticut Municipal Zoning Regulations and Ordinances for Livestock". This 19 page document is a collaborative discussion of the current (2012) recommendations by a team experts from around the state of CT in best current recommendations for municipalities to consider when writing or amending their own local zoning regulations and ordinances regarding the raising of livestock in their municipality. (Hereinafter in these minutes this document will be referred in a shortened form as "The Livestock Document.")

6) Old Business:

a) Updates from Town Planner concerning the Slembeck Farm.

A.Turner reported that currently he has two farmers (both women from Colchester with

agricultural backgrounds) who are interested in working with the Town and other state and federal agencies to purchase this farm from the Slembeck family and then preserve it for agricultural uses only (not residential development) using a variety of preservation techniques and sources of funding. One of these prospective buyers has already walked the property with the Town Planner and the other one is scheduled to do so in the near future. The Slembecks are working very cooperatively with the town to try to insure that this property will ultimately be sold to remain in agricultural use. The other agencies involved so far in this potential transaction are the USDA Farm Service Agency which has funding for new farmers to acquire property for agricultural use, the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and the Connecticut Farmland Trust who each, potentially, could hold different types of agricultural easements on this farm.

b) Update from Town Planner concerning the Cost of Community Services Study.

A.Turner said that Paula Stahl of the UConn Extension Service has begun her analysis of the tax and land use data provided by the Town of Colchester. Ms. Stahl is an economist and former town planner and former town manager in other towns. She has prepared a Cost of Community Services Study for the town of Lebanon and has her own computer models to analyze the data she has received from Colchester's Tax Assessor and GIS data from Town Hall.

The project, funded by a grant from the CT Department of Agriculture (with matching funds in kind from the Town), is well underway. It is expected that Ms.Stahl will have initial findings by year end and a final report to the Town in the spring of 2013. The results of this study are expected to have broad application as input to the thinking about and creation of future Plans of Conservation and Development (POCD) in the Town of Colchester.

c) Discussion and possible action on Agriculture Commission recommendations to the Planning & Zoning Commission concerning zoning regulations and ordinances for livestock in the Town of Colchester.

The Livestock Document (see full official title in item 5 of these minutes) was discussed in a brainstorming session including all present at this meeting—commission members, alternates, the Town Planner, Selectman Soby, and C. Bourque.

A.Turner told the group that he was one of the people who was consulted during the creation of this document so he had input early on. He said that there were two sorts of models for how municipalities might deal with regulations about the raising of livestock in their towns. There is what he called the “East Windsor Model” in which the town planning and zoning department constructed an extraordinarily detailed set of regulations on this topic—micro-managing all aspects of this subject as to what could or could not be done within the borders of its town regarding the raising of livestock.

The second model is what has ended up being recommended in The Livestock Document which generally recommends that municipalities rely on and defer to the resources of various federal and state agencies as much as possible to regulate these activities according to best current practices as they evolve over time.

A.Turner also reminded the commission that very soon we would have our first official look at the draft of proposed new zoning regulations for the Town of Colchester and would be encouraged to review the pertinent sections of this document and suggest changes as it may be

deemed desirable to this document.

It was noted that piggeries and the raising of fur-bearing animals are still prohibited under current zoning regulations in the Town of Colchester. The town P&Z still expects to get from the Agriculture Commission its recommendations for how to deal with this specific issue.

MOTION: L.Curtis moved **that the Agriculture Commission recommend that the Town of Colchester adopt the principles and practices in the “Guidance & Recommendations for Connecticut Municipal Zoning Regulations and Ordinances for Livestock” document; and also, specifically, that pigs and fur bearing animals be treated as any other class of livestock and not be specifically prohibited by any local zoning regulations.**

A.Savitsky seconded the motion. In further discussion D. Wasniewski asked how these recommendations fit in with the updating of the Colchester Plans of Conservation and Development (POCD). A.Turner said that as the Town Planner, he had been directed by the Planning and Zoning Commission to direct his attention first with rewriting the zoning regulations and after that to update the POCD to reflect changes made to local regulations, etc. Mr.Turner suggested that Mr.Wasniewski could certainly bring up this concern about the order that these projects were undertaken directly by appearing before the P&Z Commission at its next regularly scheduled meeting.

A vote on the motion was taken and it **passed unanimously.**

Both Chairman Gillman and C.Bourque plan to speak in favor of this motion before the P&Z Commission at its next regularly scheduled meeting. Mr. Bourque will also try to have J.Nichols of the Farm Bureau on hand at this upcoming P&Z meeting to advocate for this approach to the regulations regarding the raising of livestock in the Town of Colchester.

7. New Business:

a) Discussion of the Future of the Colchester Farmers' Market:

J. Savitsky (who is the market manager for the Colchester Farmers' Market) told us that the St. Joseph's Polish Club is limited in its physical capacity for our farmers' market to expand. As a result of the physical constraints of this site, Mr. Savitsky has had discussions with both the Colchester Historical Society and the Town of Colchester Parks and Recreation Department about potential alternatives to this market at either the Zagray Farm or the Colchester Town Green. In October there will be two special markets to explore the potential of these sites: on October 14 the market will be held at the Zagray Farm on Route 85 and on October 21 the market will be held on the Town Green. This will give the farmers' market the opportunity to preview and evaluate each of these potential sites for suitability as a potential new permanent location. Also J.Savitsky is planning to meet with the First Selectman about relocation of the market to another part of our town.

There was a round-table discussion of this topic in which many ideas about how to make changes to this market to allow it to grow and prosper over time. Various alternative locations were discussed, such as the green in front of the Town Hall, the High School, the parking lot at the former Jack's Chevrolet showroom on South Main Street. Also discussed were the advisability of changing the time and day of the week of this market to make it, perhaps, more consumer friendly. (S.Soby advised us that if the Town Green between the gazebo and

Norwich Avenue is to be used, the Board of Trustees of Bacon Academy needs to give its permission since they oversee that section of the Town Green.) Also discussed was the possibility of applying for a State of CT Agricultural Viability Grant to construct a permanent pavillion somewhere in town to house this market, making it more easily accessible regardless of the weather.

Nothing was decided on this topic, but it was the general consensus that it is important to keep this issue on our agenda for further discussion and possible action at future meetings.

8. Adjournment:

MOTION: L.Curtis moved to adjourn the meeting at 8:15 P.M. A.Savitsky seconded.
Unanimously approved.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Leslie Curtis".

Leslie Curtis
Secretary