

Colchester Agriculture Commission  
Minutes of Special Meeting  
Tuesday, April 3, 2012 - 7:00 P.M.  
Cragin Library, Zagray Room

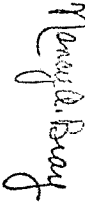
Attending: L.Curtis, E.Gillman, A.Savitsky, J.Savitsky, D.Wasniewski

Absent: J.Becker, A.Lyons

Liaisons attending: C.Bourque (New London County Farm Bureau)  
A.Turner (Town Planner)

Also attending were K.Przekopski, B. Przekopski, D.Wray

NANCY A. BRAY  
TOWN PLANNER



RECEIVED  
COLCHESTER, CT  
2012 APR 10 PM 12:52

1. Call to Order:

Meeting was called to order by Chairman E.Gillman at 7:04 P.M.

Chairman Gillman asked for a motion to allow citizen's comments during the conduct of this meeting. A. Savitski so moved and D. Wasniewski seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

Minutes of the regular meeting of 3-19-12 were read by Secretary L. Curtis. D. Wasniewski moved that the minutes be approved as read and A. Savitski seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

2. Chairman's Report to Commission:

E.Gillman stated that she had requested this special meeting of the Agriculture Commission to meet with the Town Planner to discuss the Commission's concerns about details of how the proposed purchase of the Slembeck farm would be handled by the Town in the event that the voters approved the bonding request for this purpose. She said that it was her personal opinion that there were three major concerns which needed to be discussed at this meeting:

- a. That the proposed easement on the property after its purchase needs to be held by an organization who has experience with agricultural easements.
- b. That the Agriculture Commission needs to be involved in the future in the process in the future to help select an owner or renter of this farm.
- c. That the language of the vote on this bonding measure be such as to insure the intent that this farm, if purchased by the town, will remain in agricultural usage in perpetuity.

3. Discussion of possible actions regarding this potential purchase:

There ensued a comprehensive discussion of these concerns and others with participation by the Town Planner and members of the commission and the citizens who were present.

A. Turner stated that for the Town of Colchester to be eligible to become certified to compete for matching grant money from the state under the new Community Farms Preservation grant program, all the required paperwork needs to be submitted to the state by the May 28, 2012 deadline. He told us that he has been in contact with R.Olsen from the CT Department of Agriculture to insure that the Town will have all the necessary paperwork submitted in order to fulfill all the prerequisites for consideration by the state for future grants which will be available under this new program.

One of the items that is still outstanding is a document outlining the Town's Ranking System for possible farmland acquisition under this program. It was agreed that A. Turner would send a copy of the American Farmland Trust's ranking system to Chairman Gillman who would then send it on to all commission members. Anybody who wants to suggest changes or additions to this existing document to tailor it to the needs of the Town of Colchester will then forward their suggestions to Chairman Gillman. Chairman Gillman will consolidate these suggestions for presentation to the entire Agriculture Commission at the next meeting on Monday, April 16. The goal will be to complete this task and submit the finished document to the Town for inclusion in the submission to the State on May 28.

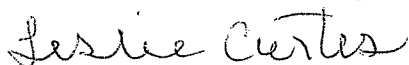
A. Turner listened to the multi-faceted discussion about how the commission members think it best to plan for management of this potential acquisition of farmland . He will provide his summary of this discussion next week, and his summary of this discussion will be attached as an addendum to these minutes. He also encourages all commission members to email him with any further thoughts on this subject to email him at [planner@colchesterct.gov](mailto:planner@colchesterct.gov) or to call him on his office number of 860-537-7280.

In further discussion later in the meeting, a consensus view of the commission was established that it is critically important that the purchase of this farmland should be done with all due diligence and in such a way as to not preclude the town's eligibility to procure grant money from the state to defray the direct costs of this acquisition to the taxpayers of the Town of Colchester. By doing so it may be possible to reduce the portion of the purchase price that will ultimately need to be actually bonded vs. the theoretical total amount of the potential bonding which would be needed if no grant money can be made available by the state for this purchase. The commission believes that if this procurement is done in the most fiscally prudent way possible—specifically, in this case, by the town's being successful in its attempt to qualify for and then actually receiving grant money for this purpose prior to closing--it will be a stronger case to put before the voters and therefore more likely to meet with their approval at a referendum. Such fiscal prudence could also set an excellent precedent for future such acquisitions by the Town to conserve Colchester's farmland as the opportunities arise.

#### 4. Adjournment:

A.Savitsky moved to adjourn the meeting at 8:55 and D.Wasniewski seconded: motion was unanimously approved.

Respectfully submitted,



Leslie Curtis  
Secretary

**Draft Principals – Slembeck Farm purchase - Colchester Agriculture Commission - April 3, 2012**

- An agricultural easement should be developed and applied to the property. Easement provisions must be properly and comprehensively completed to ensure that the property remains a “farm”. Once completed and applied, the agricultural assessment could be held by an outside group (not the Town).
  
- A firm valuation for the property post sale must be completed. A firm value for easement and then for property once the easement is applied must be developed. The CT farmland trust valuation process might be a good place to start
  
- The residence on the property should not be sold separately – Farming is a 24 hour/ 7 day a week and it is a benefit to a farmer to live on the property.
  
- The Commission finds that either leasing or selling the property to qualified parties is acceptable.
  
- If the property is to be sold it must be to a qualified buyer that will utilize/manage the farm in a manner consistent with the principals the town develops.
  - Develop criteria for ownership – owners qualified and then a bidding process
  
- If the property is to be leased then the term should be at least 5 years. Criteria to qualify lessees would include standards regarding:
  - Farm experience
  - Capital status

- Establish bidding process
- Maybe lease with an option to buy
  
- Too valuable to be a community farm – The commission supports the idea of community farming but does find that this property is too valuable in terms of quality and size to be used for that purpose.
  
- Town should review process for State funding. If the process requires the Town to wait to purchase so that property would be eligible for State funding, that should be