

Colchester Agriculture Commission
Minutes of Meeting
Monday, February 11, 2013 – 6:30 P.M.
Town Hall, Room 2

Attending: L.Curtis, E.Gillman, A.Savitsky, D.Wasniewski (arrived at 6:39),
J.Savitsky (Alternate, arrived at 6:34)

Absent: J.Becker

Others attending: A. Turner (Town Planner—from 6:30 to 7:04 due to scheduling conflict),
C.Bourque (New London County Farm Bureau), G.Desrosiers,
S.Desrosiers, O.Duksa, D.Wray

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COLCHESTER, CT
2013 FEB 12 PM 1:39
NANCY A. PROBY
TOWN CLERK

1. Call to Order:

Meeting was called to order by Chairman E.Gillman at 6:31 P.M.

2. Additions to Agenda: None.

3. Approve Minutes of the Agricultural Commission on December 17, 2012:

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

4. Citizen's Comments: None.

5. Chairman's Report:

E.Gillman pointed out that there were only two major items on the agenda for this evening's meeting and that she hoped we could make progress tonight on these important matters.

6) Old Business:

a) Discussion (including input from the public) and possible action with respect to the Agricultural Section of the current draft of Colchester Land Use Regulations.

E.Gillman reported that on Sunday, February 3, there was a meeting of a group of Colchester farmers and others held at the home of C.Bourque for the purpose of reviewing a new draft of Section 8 of the proposed zoning regulations concerning Agricultural Uses. The document under consideration at this meeting was the revision to the original draft of Section 8 as reworked by A.Turner based on previous suggestions emanating from Agriculture Commission meetings and other input from members of the community received by the Town Planner's office. There were about a dozen people at this meeting (which lasted for five hours) including two members of the Agriculture Commission, E.Gillman and D.Wasniewski. This revised document was scrutinized by that group with an eye to making further changes in the language thereof that would be acceptable to the agricultural community in Colchester.

(Note: The revision of this document that was under consideration has not been put up on the Town Website, but was sent as an email attachment to L.Curtis, Secretary of this commission, who then forwarded it to E.Gillman and C.Bourque for their review and subsequent action as described above.)

Then C.Bourque officially presented the findings of this group to the full Agriculture Commission. The gist of the discussion is summarized in "NOTES ON SECTION 8.11 AGRICULTURAL USES", a two page document prepared by D.Rosenblatt, a Colchester farmer who was part of this group meeting and who agreed to summarize the ideas discussed. This document is attached to these minutes as part of the public record of this meeting since all these ideas were discussed and expanded on by C.Bourque at this evening's meeting.

The Town Planner A.Turner was present for the first part of Mr. Bourque's explanation of these proposed changes and some of the reasoning behind these suggestions, but Mr. Turner had to leave this meeting at 7:04 due to a scheduling conflict. Before Mr. Turner left, however, he said that he intends to put a discussion of these and other concerns of the Agriculture Commission as the first item on the agenda for the March 6, 2013 meeting of the Planning and Zoning Commission.

Mr. Turner also reiterated that this process to get the wording of these regulations right would not be rushed. Members of the farmers group noted that they realize now why it took other towns so very long to produce a workable document regarding Agricultural zoning regulations for their towns since the issues are complicated and there are other constituencies besides the farming community to consider in getting all the wording correct for our town.

In addition to the discussion of the items outlined in the "NOTES" addendum attached to these minutes, there was also discussion of the ways that the wording about "caretaker housing" could be changed to enable all farmers in Colchester to be able to provide appropriate housing on their farms, as necessary, for their own agricultural workers. (The current first draft of these regulations provides this possibility specifically only for equestrian facilities, and the intent would be to broaden this right to include all the town's farms.)

Also the concept of the "Commercial Arterial Zone" presented in the original draft of these regulations was elaborated by C.Bourque. In the map available online on the Town's website these zones were indicated only by a colored line on some parts of Old Hartford Road, Route 149, Route 16, and Route 85. The current proposed zoning map does not indicate which specific parcels adjacent to these corridors would qualify for this special zoning consideration. This omission, in Mr. Bourque's opinion, could potentially allow significant commercial development in areas along these state roads which now have over time developed into being primarily residential in nature.

There was a lengthy discussion of how the Agriculture Commission should proceed to make our recommendations known to the P&Z and community at large. C.Bourque stated that the first public hearing scheduled for Tuesday, February 12, on the original draft of the new zoning regulations is an event being organized and conducted by the office of the Town Planner, Zoning Enforcement Officer, and others in the Building Department office. This is not an official hearing conducted by the P&Z Commission itself. Many opinions were expressed about the need for such input as the Agriculture Commission has developed to have been considered much earlier in the process, but in the end several strategies were decided upon to further our goals given the current scenario.

First, at least one Agriculture Commission member will attend the Tuesday, February 12 public hearing and be sure that the citizens attending this meeting are aware that that the draft of the Section 8 regulations pertaining to Agriculture that is currently available online is not the most up-to-date version of these regulations; rather this entire section is still very much a work in progress. L.Curtis volunteered to attend this meeting and try to convey this message to those in attendance.

Second, the farmers group headed by C.Bourque will work to get a completed draft of all its recommendations that could be used to replace all the language in the current draft of the Section 8 Agricultural Uses regulations that is available online. The hope is that this task could be completed before the next special meeting of the Agriculture Commission on Monday, February 25, 2013 so that action to endorse the revisions to this section of the regulations as submitted by the farmers group could be taken by the full Commission as an addition to the agenda for this Special Meeting. If this happens, representatives of the Agriculture Commission could then attend the P&Z meeting on March 6 to offer these officially endorsed revisions for consideration by the P&Z to replace the original draft of Section 8.

Third, the idea of having a joint meeting of the Agriculture Commission and the Planning and Zoning Commission was discussed. This might prove to be an appropriate format in which the final version of the Section 8 Agricultural Uses section of the new regulations may be ironed out to the satisfaction of all constituencies.

b) Any other new business deemed necessary: None.

7. New Business:

a) Discussion and possible action of nomination and election of candidates for Agriculture Commission officers.


Action on this was postponed for a future meeting

b) Any other new business deemed necessary: None.

7. Adjournment:

MOTION: L.Curtis moved to adjourn the meeting at 8:34 P.M. A.Savitsky seconded. Unanimously approved.

Respectfully submitted,



Leslie Curtis
Secretary

NOTES ON SECTION 8.11 AGRICULTURAL USES

8.11.2 DEFINITION AND TERMS

PARAGRAPH 2, 3 AND 4 (BOTTOM OF PAGE)

ELIMINATE "THE RIGHT TO FARM" SENTENCE

ELIMINATE PARAGRAPH REFERENCING GAAP'S

ELIMINATE SENTENCE BEGINNING "GAAPs..."

OR USE WORDING TO REFER TO THE CT DEPT OF AGRICULTURE GENERALLY ACCEPTED AGRICULTURAL PRACTICES.

8.11.3

ELIMINATE ALL REFERENCES TO AFRICULTURAL BUILDINGS. REQUEST A SEPARATE SUB-HEADING FOR AGRICULTURAL BUILDINGS. POSSIBLY INCLUDE THE INFORMATION ON BUILDINGS AS SPECIFICALLY HOUSING FOR LIVESTOCK.

UTILIZE CANTERBURY STATUES AS PERTAINING TO AGRICULTURAL BUILDINGS

PARAGRAPH 1: RE-WRITE TO READ: "THE RAISING OF LIVESTOCK IS PERMITTED ON PROPERTIES IN THE RURAL ZONE AS DEFINIED IN CHAPTER 55."

PARAGRAPH 4: CHANGE PARCEL SIZE TO 120,000 SQUARE FEET.

PARAGRAPH 6 SHOULD READ: "Accessory structures, such as hoop houses, run-in sheds, birthing sheds, and similar structures easily moved and not permanently mounted to the ground are permitted provided they meet the 100' setback requirements.

8.11.4

FARM STORES

THE FIRST SENTENCE OF PARAGRAPH 1 SHOULD READ: "One (1) farm store per active farming entity is permitted by special permit provided they meet all requirements of this section and is sited more than 50' from any property boundary."

THIRD BULLET POINT SHOULD READ: "All products available on the site for sale shall be from agricultural goods produced within CT. "

8.11.5

SEASONAL FARM STANDS

FIRST BULLET POINT: TRY TO ELIMINATE THE "ZONING PERMIT" IF YOU CAN. The right to farm should also include the right to sell wares and a seasonal farm stand, as long as it meets the setback, square footage and parking restrictions, should not need a "special zoning permit"

THIRD BULLET POINT: This paragraph was "cut and pasted" from the FARM STORES section. It should be re-written to reflect "farm stand" instead of "store"

THIRD BULLET POINT: THE SECOND SENTENCE SHOULD READ: " ALL PRODUCTS SOLD MUST BE PRODUCED IN THE STATE OF CONNECTICUT"

8.11.6

AGRICULTURAL SIGNAGE

FIRST BULLET POINT: CHANGE SENTENCE TO READ: Onw gricultural sign per farm entity is allowed".

SEOND BULLET POINT: THE LAST WORD SHOULD BE "SIDES"

THIRD BULLET POINT: I'm not sure why, but I crossed this out, but offered no note as to why. I'm good with directional signs.