



Town of Falmouth Community Development Department
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Memorandum

Date: October 10, 2013
To: Councilor Teresa Pierce
From: Amanda L. Stearns, Community Development Director
Cc: Nathan Poore, Town Manager
Justin Brown, Code Enforcement Officer
Ethan Croce, Senior Planner
Re: Zoning restrictions on commercial greenhouses

I am requesting that the Council consider removing the current restriction on commercial greenhouses in the Farm and Forest District (F). This issue has come to the attention of staff through a request for a permit. The applicant has applied for a permit to construct the greenhouse as a residential accessory use at this time. The commercial use of the greenhouse cannot be permitted without a zoning amendment.

The current definition of “Farming” is:

Farming: *The cultivation of the soil for food products or other useful or valuable growth of the field or garden, nursery stock and non-commercial greenhouses, but excluding animal husbandry.*

The Farm and Forest District also currently allows “Animal Husbandry.”

Animal Husbandry: *Boarding, raising, breeding or keeping of animals, fowl or birds, for commercial purposes including, without limitations, swine, poultry, cattle and horses.*

Commercial greenhouses, prior to the Village Center District being enacted in May of this year, were not permitted anywhere in town. Horticultural Nursery was added as a permitted use in VC1 and VC2 in order to recognize the large nursery in existence. Commercial greenhouses are typically an integral part of a nursery operation.

No explanation of why greenhouses were eliminated in the uses allowed has been uncovered. The 1965 ordinance did not define farming and permitted the following uses.

6.12 Farming; forestry; orchards; dairying; gardening; poultry raising and animal husbandry; greenhouses; tree, plant and shrub nurseries; tool and vehicle storage buildings and other buildings or uses of land and of buildings customarily accessory to the foregoing.

When the ordinance was rewritten in 1983, the definition of farming was introduced with the same language in the ordinance today:

2.20 Farming: The cultivation of the soil for food products or other useful or valuable growth of the field or garden, nursery stock and non-commercial greenhouses, but excluding animal husbandry.

The proposed Comprehensive Plan addresses agriculture:

State Goal:

- Maine's Growth Management Act recommends safeguarding the State's agricultural and forest resources from the type of development which threatens those resources.

Proposed Goal:

- Complete an inventory of agricultural land, its suitability, availability, and state of protection.

The sustainability of the few working farms in the town depends of the ability to efficiently use the land and to continually look toward ways to improve productivity. Increasing the growing season by the use of greenhouses is one method that farmers have to achieve this goal.

In a district that allows farmers to practice animal husbandry without limitation, it seems reasonable that the use of greenhouses would be permitted.

Thank you for your consideration in bringing this matter to the Council for consideration.