MINUTES
AGRICULTURE COMMISSION
MONDAY, April 6, 2026
MUNICIPAL OFFICE COMPLEX
MEETING ROOM 3
VIA YOUTUBE LIVE
7:00 P.M.
REGULAR MEETING

Attendees: Aaron Taylor, Stephanie Cobleigh, Rochelle Davis, Denise Dill (alt), Theresa Govert (alt), Pat Capel (alt)

Guest: Linda Zemienieski

1. Call to order
    a. Meeting called to order at 7:05
2. Chair's report: Committee is now full.
3. Motion to include Denise as an alternate to voting member tonight.
        i. Aaron motioned
        ii. Rochelle seconded
4. Additions to the Agenda:
    a. Steph – Cross talk to support EDC and the Heritage Market
        i. Moved by Theresa
        ii. Second Aaron
    b. Rochelle – Adding distribution of NRCS, UConn Extension programs
        i. Moved by Aaron
        ii. Seconded by Theresa
5. Motion to Approve Minutes from March 2, 2026 meeting (circulated by email)
    a. Motion to approve - Aaron
    b. Seconded – Rochelle
6. New Business
    a. Conservation Commission (via Pat) proposed consideration of the use of town property for hay or grazing. (Re: The Harris Property)
        i. Hay: Pat spoke to the Conservation Commission and found that the easement with the state lists no commercial activity, including no use of herbicide/pesticide in an effort to preserve the natural state. Non-native plants are forbidden in the agreement.
        ii. Grazing: While the Land Trust had suggested using goats for brush control, and this may be considered under this agreement. Suggesting that perhaps the land could be leased out for grazing goats or sheep. The teams will continue cross talk to support each other in further investigation of options and feasibility.
    b. EDC Cross talk to support the Heritage Market with farmers.
        i. It is currently unclear how to reach out to farmers in town to help promote the Heritage Market as a "farmer's market"; we don't have an email or mailing list.
        ii. Questions for EDC follow up:

1. How many participants attend the Heritage Market? (Stephanie to reach out to Lauren)
2. Is the Farmers' Market happening at Shagbark – is this planned for 2026, and who is organizing? Generally, this was the best attended market in past years.
3. Ballek's Farmer's Market was noted as being smaller and more boutique.

c. Communication & promotion of opportunities for trainings and programs offered by NRCS, UConn Extensions, etc.
    i. Rochelle sent notice of upcoming events to the paper for the town calendar regarding local events. Suggesting adding links to the town website with resources. Suggesting that rather than building a new resource, that we work to direct people to existing resources. Suggesting a quarterly post to the local paper with events that are likely most relevant, i.e. training, festivals, events. Denise will ask the local paper for the correct contact. Team will look for relevant events to share before the next meeting. Rochelle will work with the paper as a point of contact.

7. Old Business
    a. Right to Farm Signs
        i. Theresa has contacted Colchester but has not heard back yet. Suggesting this could be an opportunity to solicit proposed locations from people in town.
        ii. Linda asking for information on the available signs; requesting a photo and size to get a quote for production. Requesting locations to research installation spec's and responsibility as well.
    b. Farm Count
        i. Aaron and Theresa circulated a list of known farms in town. Farm definition by production, registration, etc. considered. Farm stands should be supported as well, including all local producers.
        ii. Soliciting vendors for the Heritage Market may help identify other farms or producers in town. Stephanie will reach out to Lauren Pszczolkowska regarding previous work done for the local Farm Stand count, and with Jim Ventres on known local farms.
        iii. Consider also if there may be land used for farm activities, even if the farm is not located in East Haddam. Noting that Lake Hayward area receives mail through Colchester, so addresses are confusing.
    c. Property Tax Relief
        i. Denise will request a list of farms that claim personal property exemption from the assessor's office. Linda is setting up a meeting with Aaron and Todd Gelston to discuss further. Suggesting this tax benefit could be something to encourage new farms in town.
    d. Curtin Farm Stand project (near Ballek's)
        i. no updates pending Jim Curtin's attendance.
8. Public Comments
        i. Nothing additional
9. Adjournment
    a. Motion to Adjourn – Aaron
    b. Second – Stephanie