AGENDA
AGRICULTURE COMMISSION
MONDAY, JULY 10, 2023
MUNICIPAL OFFICE COMPLEX
MEETING ROOM 3
VIA YOUTUBE LIVE
7:00 P.M.
REGULAR MEETING

The meeting was called to order at 19:03 by Agriculture Commission Chair, Ronald Gross.
Meeting minutes by Shaleen Thody - Ag. Commission Alternate

Commission members present
Aaron Taylor, Mark Henderson, Ron Gross, Bonnie Buongiorne, Ron Distefano, Carleen Quinn, and Shaleen Thody(as alternate)

Business from the Chair - Ron Gross
- Meeting minutes from the previous meeting were not approved.
- Agenda for 7/10/23 meeting approved
    - 1st Ron Gross
    - 2nd Ron Distefano

Communications to Committee from the Chair - Ron Gross
- List of all Farm Stands in town sent out to all members from EDC.
- Request made for Agricultural Com. members to join a sub-committee with Planning and Zoning and Economic Development.
    - Nominations
        - Aaron Taylor
        - Ron Distefano
- 59-23 regulations are part of the meeting record and communication from Jim Ventres (land use office) and were circulated to the Agricultural Commission via email.
    - Discussion from chair about the differences between rules, laws and regulations
    - Health department laws are in question but are not a part of the Agricultural Commission discussion.

Discussion about meeting intent from the Chair - Ron Gross
- Planning and Zoning regulations from other towns referenced for 2023 Farm Stands draft that was circulated.
- Rules have been circumvented. There are questions regarding the rules and regulations regarding Farm Stands in East Haddam.
- Intent is for commission to create a level playing field for all those who engage in agriculture in East Haddam.

Comments from the commission members about 2023 Draft
- Mark Henderson - Concerns about impingement on neighbors and duplicity in regulations.
- Ron Gross - Referenced Commercial, Residential and Resort rules as being distinct entities with different rules and regulations from the town.
- Carleen Quinn - East Haddam is desirable for some because of the lack of regulations on the number of animals. Make sure we are not being more restrictive.
- Aaron Taylor - Keep in mind that current regulations do not provide for what small farms want to do. Encourage innovation and participation in farming with regulations. Keep fairness and transparency in mind. Make regulations very clear to empower farmers so as to reduce conflicts with neighbors.
- Ron Distefano - 19 large bodied large stock should be increased. Wants to have further discussion about the entire document at a subsequent meeting.

- Bonnie Buongiorne – No comment
- Shaleen Thody - comments are not included because she was acting as an alternate so her contributions are not a part of the record.

Discussion about Farm Stand and Farm Store

- Motion by Aaron Taylor to recommend that the retail sales of a farm store in all districts be by limited basis at 25%.
    - Ron Gross - second the motion

Discussion about size of stand at Farm Stand

- 75 square feet for each acre of land on the same lot.
- Ron Gross referenced page 23 of the document.
    - Discussion about the difference between store and stand.
        - Special permit required for stores in other towns
        - Stores are year-round in other towns

BREAK

Comments from the Audience

- Roxanne Cone - Berryhill Farm
    - Moodus Reservoir Farm Stand
    - 1984 sold development rights to the state of CT
    - Needs to grow at least 50% of what she sells
    - Has 200 square foot stand that is portable.
    - Concerned that other stands will out-compete her if town regulations are different from the state regulations she needs to abide by under the agreement from 1984.
- Toni Dumane - Berry Road - East Haddam
    - Member of P&Z Commission for 4 years
    - Concerned about increased traffic and noise from farm stand
    - Wants enforcement to be considered.
    - The Ag. Commission should know that P&Z took up the issue due to neighbors complaining.
    - At meeting to produce a sub-committee of Ag, EDC, P& Z
    - Intent of her attendance is to share the perspective from P&Z about noise complaints and neighborhood complaints.

Discussion about the size of Farm Stands

- Motion made by Ron Gross to recommend that Farm Stands be not bigger than 75 square feet per 1 acre of land (inside and outside of the stand) while no less than 50% of the sales produced or grown on the farm with the additional sales be agricultural products from CT Grown sources.
    - Second – Carleen Quinn
    - Passed with four votes, with one abstention

- Subsequent further discussion after the vote -
    - Delineation between Farm Store and Farm Stand by Ron Gross - proposal and comments are withdrawn.

Discussion about the lot size needed for a Farm Store

- Motion made by Aaron Taylor to recommend to reduce the lot size for a farm store to a lot of a minimum of 2 acres of owned or leased property with no recommendation from the Agricultural Commission for the size of the store but with the need for a special exemption site plan review/zoning permit to be determined by Planning and Zoning.

    - 2nd the motion Ron Gross
    - Motion passed unanimously

Motion to adjourn @ 20:55

- Ron Distefano - 1st
- Ron Gross - 2nd

Meeting minutes by Shaleen Thody - Ag. Commission Alternate