MINUTES
AGRICULTURE COMMISSION
MONDAY, April 1, 2024
MUNICIPAL OFFICE COMPLEX
MEETING ROOM 3
VIA YOUTUBE LIVE
7:00 P.M.
REGULAR MEETING

Membership:

Ron Gross - Chair

Bonnie Buongiorne
Aaron Taylor
Ron Distefano
Mark Henderson - Alternate
Shaleen Thody - Alternate
Carleen Quinn

1. **Call to order**
   a. 19:05 pm by Ron Gross
   b. Attendance:

Ron Gross, Aaron Taylor, Ron Distefano, Shaleen Thody

2. **Pledge of Allegiance**
   a. Completed

3. **Approval of the agenda**
   a. Ron Distefano
   b. Aaron second
   c. Appoint Shaleen to full member in absence of
   i. Bonnie
   ii. Carleen

4. **Approval of the draft minutes from March 4, 2024 meeting**
   a. Ron Gross motion to approve minutes
   b. Ron Distefano and Aaron Taylor move to approve with addition of adding full names to March 4th minutes. Passed with no objections or abstentions

5. **Comments from the Chair**
   a. A new Town Agriculture Commission email will be set up and working as of the next meeting. Questions and comments can be sent to that email, and will be answered at the end of our meetings if possible, otherwise the questions and comments will be responded to as soon as possible after the end of the meeting.
   i. Irene H. said to contact IT with any issues
   ii. Ron Gross will respond to email at the end of the meetings.

6. **Communications**

a. No new communications

7. **New Business**

a. Ms. Haines has been asked to attend this meeting, if she can, to discuss the CT Examiner article regarding property tax exemptions, and the subsequent document forwarded to the Commission by Mr. Taylor.

i. Farm positive community already.
ii. Tax exempt programs for redevelopment or abatement for buildings or farms.
iii. Work with regard to machinery at the state level.
iv. $100,000 exemption for machinery exists - state $200,000 exemption due to cost of machinery.
v. How much will this affect the tax base? We need to look with the assessor.
vi. Need $15,000 worth of sales. Who in town has this much in gross sales?
vii. Suggestion from Ron Gross was to put this in the East Haddam News to see if they would like to get a tax exemption. Irene was hesitant to put this in the newspaper because the tax revenue must come from somewhere.
viii. Aaron Taylor - states that East Haddam is a farm friendly town. Aaron suggests that the Tax Reduction Programs would make it even more farm friendly and invite more farmers into town and increase the tax base.
ix. Next step is to talk to the assessor. How many people are making more than $15,000 with farms?
x. Have to have the tax exemption with the state that you are actually a farm to qualify.
xi. Registering as a farm happens every two years. Tax return with state must be more than $2500?
xii. Irene will talk to the assessor about this matter on Wednesday.

b. **East Haddam Representative(s) to the RiverCOG RAC (Regional Agriculture Council)**

i. The representative that was attending for East Haddam was not appointed by the town.
   1. The individual was self-appointed.
ii. Ron Gross and Aaron Taylor will be attending.
   1. Aaron did not want to usurp the position and wanted to go on the record saying so.
iii. Last meeting
   1. Project they are discussing is inventorying the regulations in all the towns.

8. **Old Business**

a. Status of the Farm Stand

i. Corner of Daniels Rd. Ron Gross talked to Mr. Curtain about the farm stand plans. Mr. Curtin Wants to start to get the project going despite the discrepancy in prices in property acquisition costs from the state of CT.

b. **Status of the Farm Stand/Farm Store regulations: Awaiting a public meeting**

i. Awaiting a public meeting from Jim Ventres.
c. Shaleen talking to the HS about partnering with the Ag. program
d. Shaleen will bring the MS to talk about the program on May 6th.

9. **Adjournment**

Motion to adjourn at 19:31 Ron Distefano, second Aaron Taylor.

Participants may view the meeting on YouTube Live at the following link:
https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCLZq-CmatoKY6FW829c6mBA?view_as=subscriber

You may also access the YouTube Live link from the Town's website:
www.easthaddam.org