MINUTES
AGRICULTURE COMMISSION
MONDAY, MAY 4, 2026
MUNICIPAL OFFICE COMPLEX
MEETING ROOM 3
VIA YOUTUBE LIVE
7:00 P.M.
REGULAR MEETING

Attendees:

Commission Members:

Aaron P. Taylor (D), Chairman
Shaleen B. Thody (U), Secretary
Rochelle A. Davis (D)

Alternates:

Patrick A. Capel (U)

1. =Call to order
    a. Meeting called to order at 7:03
2. Approval of the agenda

Rochelle motion to approve, Aaron 2nd

3. Approval of the draft minutes from April 6, 2026 meeting

Rochelle motion to approve, Shaleen 2nd

4. Chair's report

No new news that is not already shared in emails.

5. Correspondence
    a. Email from Anna Tromza re: agricultural education
    - Questions about email correspondence about Lyman Memorial High School for Ag. Program. No one in town has attended Middletown since 2008. Tuition needed to pay for the program. Money should be back from the state.
    - Looking for support in the change.
    - State money for scholarships or funding.
    - Middletown does not offer a large animal science and meat science program.
    - Middletown doesn't work for the
    - FFA program in town focuses on caged animals and horticulture.
    - Asking for suggestions for moving forward.
    - Not asking for busing, just tuition.
    - Approved sending school.
    - Welding program at Lyman Memorial
    - Tuition - $10,000/year, $6000……state reimburses $5000.
        - Superintendents talk and then come up with an exact number.

- Push back is financial
    - Email saying that the BOE was not in a position to pay anyways even if they attend the Middletown program.
- How can we tie the education piece back to benefiting East Haddam?
- Ag. program does not support what they are looking for.
- Suggestion is to support Melissa Ziobron
- Suggestion from Aaron is to write a letter in support of Agricultural Education
    - Move to support writing a letter - Stephanie
        - Aaron Second
        - Shaleen abstain

6. New Business
    a. "Ag Corner" feature in the East Haddam news (Rochelle)
        i. Draft first entry
        350 words
        Correspondence - Aaron town's email
        ii. Frequency
        Quarterly column
        iii. What is the goal / call to action?
        Call to action is - who are you? What do you want to commission? What would be helpful to you? Is it like a directory? How do we prevent people from being intimidated?
        No vote to include in the newspaper needed.
        Provisional approval - with edits and final by email.

7. Old Business
    a. Right to Farm & CT Grown street signs
        i. Sourcing (Theresa)
        $75.00
        ii. Choosing locations
        - State roads are tricky because there is more regulations
        iii. Installation
        - Ask Teresa to inquire
        - Motion to vote Rochelle - on design Teresa made
            - 2nd Shaleen
            - All in favor - unanimous approval of design
            - Do we have to use or budget? Will it be matched?

    b. Gathering information about existing farms in East Haddam
        i. Updates & Agro-tourism support (Stephanie)
        List of farms added to Google Doc. List was from Jim Ventres
        ii. Synthesis of this data: what does this tell us?
        Internet search 10
        Commercial License 3
        Manually entered 21 - Hay, Sugarhouses as examples
        Agriculture is in town but few who does it commercially, but many folks engaged in agriculture. No bees and only one maple syrup.
        To do: Keep building the list and solicit responses from periodic newspaper column.
    c. Joint consideration of agricultural activities on conservation properties with Conservation Commission (Pat)
- Pilot program using goats to reclaim and go after the invasives.
- Interest in both committees working together.
- Lots of opportunity, but needs cooperation from interested parties.

- No introduction of non-native plants - Harris Property
    - 8 acres are still possible?

d. Property tax relief for East Haddam Farms (Aaron)

i. List from assessor of 10 farms who currently receive exemptions

- Aaron is meeting with Todd Gelston about this tomorrow.
- Denise Dill put together a list of the ten Farms.
- Promoting economic well-being of farms in town.
- Adding an exemption of buildings would result in $25,000 loss in tax revenue for the town.
- Farmer concern - two members of the commission are on the list.
    - Concerns about conflict of interest.

e. Heritage Market (Stephanie)

- Reconvene with Stephanie when she is present.

f. East Haddam Farm Stand project

- Efforts to reach out to Jim Curtin by Aaron have been unsuccessful.

8. Public Comments

None

9. Adjournment

Motion to adjourn Shaleen, Patrick 2nd.