



Chairman
Bruce Garstka

TOWN OF LEDYARD

Agricultural Commission

Meeting Minutes

741 Colonel Ledyard Highway
Ledyard, Connecticut 06339

Regular Meeting

Tuesday, February 21, 2023

6:00 PM

Town Hall Annex-Hybrid Format

I. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Garstka at 6:00 p.m.

II. ROLL CALL

Present Community-at-Large Representative Michael E. Marelli
Alternate Member- Community-at-Large William Thorne
Farming Community Allyson Angelini
Chairman-Farming Community Bruce Garstka
Community-at-Large Representative Katie Yuhas

Excused Farming Community Russell Holmberg

Non-voting Alternate Member Steve Martic

Town Councilor Naomi Rodriguez was also present.

Mr. Thorne was appointed as a voting member for Mr. Holmberg.

III. CITIZEN COMMENTS

None.

IV. COMMENTS OF COMMISSION MEMBERS

None.

V. INFORMATIONAL ITEMS

Mr. Thorne brought up a dispute between a maple syrup farmer and the town of Old Lyme and thought the Commission is doing the right thing by working with other Town Commissions.

VI. REVIEW AND APPROVAL OF MINUTES

1. Motion to APPROVE Regular Meeting Minutes from January 17, 2023

RESULT: APPROVED AND SO DECLARED

MOVER: Bruce Garstka

SECONDER: Katie Yuhas

AYE 5 Marelli Thorne Angelini Garstka Yuhas

EXCUSED 1 Holmberg

VII. OLD BUSINESS

1. Layering on GIS system for farms with 25+ acres, parcels and open space.

The next meeting (March) is with several of the Town's Committees/Commissions. Chairman Garstka will reach out for an update on the GIS layering.

Mr. Thorne asked for clarification about the difference between GIS layering for farms and GIS layering for parcels over 25 acres. Chairman Garstka explained that farms could be on both layers depending on their size.

SECCOG is updating their maps with all of their Town's Open Spaces. Mr. Marelli recently sent SECCOG a list with all of Ledyard's Open spaces for the Conservation Commission. In addition, Mr. Marelli sent SECCOG a list of all Ledyard's 490s and farming properties. He was told that they are not working on a farm layer currently but possibly in the future. When Land Use finalizes their updates, Mr. Marelli will also submit that.

RESULT: DISCUSSED

2. Explore the avenue for preserving Farmland continued.

Chairman Garstka met with Kathleen Dougherty at American Farmland Trust and she confirmed that the state of CT is mainly looking for prime farmland to preserve. Ledyard doesn't have much land that currently meets their requirements. Chairman Garstka suggested going forward the Commission should focus more on the CT Farm Land Preservation program (FPP) which would be more beneficial for the Farmers in Ledyard.

Mr. Marelli said that for large parcels, selling carbon credits is a possibility. He found a company that works with 40 acres+, and even applies for farmers who convert to no-till. It is a 20-year contract and can be complex. Chairman Garstka said it is worth exploring further.

The Commission discussed the differences between forest land and open space. The classifications are Farm, Forest and Open Space. Mr. Thorne asked if Forest can be a 490, it was answered yes, for example timber.

The Commission discussed the importance of local food given the forecasted potash shortage in Canada and encouraging raised bed gardening in Town. Ms. Yuhas mentioned that there are grants available for farmland restoration and new farmers. She wondered how the Commission can encourage agricultural production at parcels currently not being farmed. Ms. Yuhas suggested maybe the Commission can focus on how to educate people of the grants that are available to try and encourage people to farm.

RESULT: DISCUSSED

3. Any Other Old Business to come before the Commission.

Chairman Garstka spoke with a new farmer that had difficulties leasing land in Town and now is in North Stonington. Ms. Angelini mentioned the need for infrastructure, like water/electricity/fencing, for the production of certain agricultural products. Chairman Garstka agreed and said that this farmer needed access to water and electricity.

Mr. Marelli asked if there were tax breaks for equipment and buildings and the answer was yes, with limitations.

RESULT: DISCUSSED

VIII. NEW BUSINESS

1. Any Other New Business to come before the Commission.

None.

IX. ADJOURNMENT

Motion to ADJOURN the Regular Meeting at 6:24 p.m.

A motion was made by Chairman-Farming Community Garstka, seconded by Community-at-Large Representative Marelli, that this be Approved and so declared. The motion carried by the following vote:

RESULT: APPROVED AND SO DECLARED

MOVER: Bruce Garstka

SECONDER: Michael E. Marelli

AYE 5 Marelli Thorne Angelini Garstka Yuhas

EXCUSED 1 Holmberg

DISCLAIMER: Although we try to be timely and accurate these are not official records of the Town.