



TOWN OF LEDYARD

Agricultural Commission

Meeting Minutes

741 Colonel Ledyard Highway
Ledyard, Connecticut 06339

Chairman
Bruce Garstka

Joint Discussion / Regular Meeting

Tuesday, October 17, 2023

6:00 PM

Town Hall Annex-Hybrid Format

I. CALL TO ORDER

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

II. ROLL CALL

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

William Thorne arrived late at 6:12 p.m.

Also in attendance:

Juliet Hodge, Planning Director
Naomi Rodriguez, Town Council
Mary McGrattan, Town Council
Tony Capon
Karen Parkinson

III. JOINT DISCUSSION WITH MEMBERS OF THE LAND USE DEPARTMENT (PLANNING & ZONING) AS WELL AS THE PLANNING & ZONING, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, INLAND WETLANDS/ WATERCOURSES AND CONSERVATION COMMISSIONS

1. Agricultural Commission Joint Work Session

Chairman Garstka believes the Town website could use improvement, especially to draw people visiting nearby attractions to farms and other Town businesses. He believes a website that showcases the town would benefit everyone. Juliet Hodge, Town Planner said that the EDC was working on a video that showcases Ledyard that should land on the website somewhere. She agrees the website needs work but is unsure what the bandwidth is to complete the project. Ms. Yuhas said there was discussion about allowing one committee member from each committee permission to update their section. Mr. Maugle agreed that accessibility was important, as well as encouraging people to stay in town once they are here and visit other businesses. The Conservation Commission developed QR codes for all of the trails, which could be a valuable

thing to expand to other businesses in the business directory. Ms. McGrattan and Mr. Thorne suggested reaching out to the chamber of commerce. Chairman Garstka suggested inviting Justin Dube, MIS Director to the next AG meeting.

Ms. Parkinson suggested inviting the Preston Town Planner to another meeting about the plans for a village development on Rt 2A.

Ms. Parkinson also had an update on the Tri-Town trail, that they have a better understanding of the organization and hopes to develop a new plan. Avalonia has been purchasing more pieces of land in Town. They recently wrote a grant that would help connect a piece towards 214, which was supported by Groton utilities and the Town. Eversource recently installed two new parking lots as part of a DEEP grant. There is an ongoing census with a counter that records about 1,200 people per month with many of them repeat walkers and half of them dog walkers. They are working to preserve the Spicer ruins, an intact homestead dated to 1650.

Mr. Marelli had updates on the Conservation Committee. The Commission supports the acquisition of 148 Stoddards Wharf for open spaces through an OSWA grant. The Conservation Commission, Garden Club, Parks and Rec, and the Pollinator put in three rain gardens to reduce the runoff. They are also installing a riparian buffer near the future parking lot by the pond. SECCOG completed the draft of the 2023, Resilience and is now open to public comment. October 2, 2023, was the Alliance for the Mystic River Watershed from several area towns and organizations to set the goals of protecting and improving the quality of the Mystic River Watershed, which includes Whitford Brook, Haley Brook, Long Pond, etc. There are a few new trails that the Conservation Committee is going to put in to improve trail connection.

Mr. Maugle reported that Inland/Wetlands hasn't had a meeting in several months.

Ms. Hodges reported the Planning and Zoning is in the middle of a contentious appeal to remove Decater Mountain for future industrial use. Mr. Maugle asked about the impact now that the wind power project has been defunded and the removal of the rock doesn't have a purpose. She also reported they have done a lot of blight clean-up.

Mr. Marelli discussed finding a land tenant for the state farm property. He discussed the possibility with Councilor Dombrowski, who said they would be in favor of supporting any type of agriculture on those 42 acres. Ms. Parkinson said there was a volunteer mowing effort coming up. The Department of Agriculture has a pot of money that can be used for a project; the Town can't apply but a non-profit could apply if they had a land lease.

IV. CITIZENS COMMENTS

None present.

V. COMMENTS OF COMMISSION MEMBERS

1. Comments of Commission Members.

No comments.

VI. INFORMATIONAL ITEMS

1. Informational items.

VII. REVIEW AND APPROVAL OF MINUTES

1. Motion to APPROVE Regular Meeting Minutes from September 19, 2023, as written.

RESULT: APPROVED AND SO DECLARED

MOVER: Russell Holmberg

SECONDER: Katie Yuhas

AYE 7 Angelini Yuhas Martic Garstka Holmberg Thorne Marelli

VIII. CORRESPONDENCE

1. Correspondence.

The State of Connecticut forwarded a document about the Important Farmland soils designation. They are looking at sustainable agriculture (no-till) which has opened additional sights as statewide importance. It opens an additional 4,600 acres in town. Mr. Marelli requested a new map from NRCS so that the town could update the GIS. Chairman Garstka said that it opened additional land for farmers interested in selling the development rights.

IX. OLD BUSINESS

1. Any other Old Business to come before the Commission.

None.

X. NEW BUSINESS

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

Motion to APPROVE 2024 Regular Meeting dates.

January 16

February 20

March 19

April 16

May 21

June 18

July 16

August 20

September 17

October 15

November 19

December 17

RESULT: APPROVED AND SO DECLARED

MOVER: Russell Holmberg

SECONDER: Katie Yuhas

AYE 7 Angelini Yuhas Martic Garstka Holmberg Thorne Marelli

XI. ADJOURNMENT

Motion to ADJOURN the Regular/Joint Meeting at 7:09 p.m.

A motion was made by Farming Community Holmberg, seconded by Farming Community Marelli, that this be Approved and so declared. The motion carried by the following vote:

RESULT: APPROVED AND SO DECLARED

MOVER: Russell Holmberg

SECONDER: Michael E. Marelli

AYE 7 Angelini Yuhas Martic Garstka Holmberg Thorne Marelli

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