



Chairman
Bruce Garstka

TOWN OF LEDYARD

Agricultural Commission

Meeting Minutes

741 Colonel Ledyard Highway
Ledyard, Connecticut 06339

Regular Meeting

Tuesday, September 19, 2023

6:00 PM

Town Hall Annex-Hybrid Format

I. CALL TO ORDER

The Regular meeting was called to order by Chairman Garstka at 6:01 p.m.

Also in attendance was Town Councilor Naomi Rodriguez.

Steve Martic was appointed as a voting member in place of Ms. Angelini.

Bill Thorne was late. He was appointed as a voting member in place of Russell Holmberg.

II. ROLL CALL

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

Excused Farming Community Allyson Angelini
Farming Community Russell Holmberg
Farming Community Russell Holmberg

III. CITIZENS COMMENTS.

None.

IV. COMMENTS OF COMMISSION MEMBERS

1. Comments of Commission Members.

Mr. Marelli reported that he tried to speak to Land Use regarding the State Farm Land but their meeting was cancelled. He couldn't speak to Planning and Zoning. He will continue to try to speak to both groups and will report back next month.

V. INFORMATIONAL ITEMS

1. Informational items.

Chairman Garstka said he spoke with a renter at Firefly Farms in North Stonington. This farmer was a bit discouraged and commented that growing vegetables to sell at Farmers markets is more of a second job instead of primary income because it isn't steady income.

VI. REVIEW AND APPROVAL OF MINUTES**1. Motion to APPROVE the Regular Meeting minutes from August 15, 2023, as written.**

RESULT: APPROVED AND SO DECLARED

MOVER: Michael E. Marelli

SECONDER: Steve Martic

AYE 8 Marelli Marelli Thorne Thorne Garstka Garstka Yuhas Martic

EXCUSED 2 Angelini Holmberg

VII. CORRESPONDENCE**1. Correspondence.**

Chairman Garstka shared correspondence from the CT Farm Bureau. He added that it is time to renew the Commission's membership. The cost is the same as last year; \$200.00. He asked if any Commission members did not want to renew, there were no objections. Chairman Garstka said he will go through the proper channels to submit the renewal membership.

Chairman Gartska commented on an article in the CT Farm Bureau correspondence on losing farmland. He said when farmland is taken over the developer strips and sells all the prime soil from the land before building on it. Even though the topsoil is being reused the parcel is lost as farmland. Chairman Garstka said it would be nice if there was a package deal requiring the developer to move the soil to another parcel making that parcel prime farmland. He used Anderson Oil's parcel in Preston as an example. Anderson property has a stockpile of loom on the land. Mr. Thorne agreed it was a good thought, as he has seen parcels with piles of stripped soil. Mr. Martic added that the cost of the soil sales is usually pre-factored into the developer's budget.

Mr. Thorne commented that Congressman Joe Courtney is trying to pass legislation to provide assistance to small farms. He asked if the Farm Bureau is involved in that. Chairman Garstka replied that he believed they are. Mr. Thorne added that the legislature needs to happen fast, not in five years.

Chairman Garstka would like to stress the following points during the AG Joint meeting next month on October 17, 2023-

- The State doesn't automatically purchase development rights for farms.
- The State may not even accept the land if given to them at no cost, because of the responsibility to oversee the farms.
- Ledyard is not high on the State's target market, because the State is mainly interested in large

- parcels of farmland, preferably ones that abut another farm parcel.
- Local level will need to be the focus in saving farm development rights.

VIII. OLD BUSINESS

1. Agricultural Commission Website discussion.

Ms. Yuhas reported that she has a meeting scheduled with Justin Dube, MIS Director, to discuss the Commission's website.

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

Chairman Garstka met with Mayor Allyn III to discuss the possibility of Avalonia changing their mission statement to include an agricultural offshoot instead of exclusively passive recreation. Mr. Marelli added that approximately 32% of the Rowley Property on Stoddards Wharf Road is prime or State important farmland.

Councilor Rodriguez shared her experience with Avalonia; she has Avalonia property in her neighborhood, after a storm some trees fell, she asked Avalonia if residents in the neighborhood could cut the fallen trees which were blocking the side of the road where people walk. Initially Avalonia said no but then agreed to cutting only what was blocking the walkway. Avalonia said they like to leave trees where they have naturally fallen. A member from Avalonia came to supervise the residents cutting and removing the tree.

Mr. Thorne said there is a lot of land in Ledyard that is under Avalonia's supervision. He would like to see someone from the Town be involved with Avalonia. Chairman Garstka said this would also be a good topic to bring up during the next joint meeting.

RESULT: DISCUSSED

IX. NEW BUSINESS

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

Chairman Garstka, said on a side note he went to a Ledyard High School reunion at Blonder's Park. The reunion was for any Ledyard High school alumni that has been out of school at least 50 years. The Reunion Committee would like to reserve Blonder's Park Pavilion on the third Saturday in July in hopes that several people will come back for a reunion, which could be an economic generator for Ledyard. He also heard several people say that Ledyard still has that small town feel which he was happy to hear.

Ms. Yuhas asked what the agenda was for October's meeting. Chairman Garstka said during the joint meeting, he would like to talk about the Town's development rights (Town options vs. the State's) and the AG Commission's website update. Ms. Yuhas suggested inviting someone from Avalonia to the joint meeting, other members thought it was a great idea. Councilor Rodriguez said she would contact Steve Lang from Avalonia..

ACTION ITEM:

Contact Avalonia to ask if a representative would be available to present and answer questions at

the Agricultural Joint Meeting on October 17, 2023.

RESULT: DISCUSSED

X. ADJOURNMENT

Motion to ADJOURN the Regular Meeting at 6:31 p.m.

RESULT: APPROVED AND SO DECLARED

MOVER: Michael E. Marelli

SECONDER: Steve Martic

AYE 8 Marelli Marelli Thorne Thorne Garstka Garstka Yuhas Martic

EXCUSED 2 Angelini Holmberg

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