



# TOWN OF LEDYARD

741 Colonel Ledyard Highway  
Ledyard, Connecticut 06339

## Agricultural Commission Meeting Minutes

Chairman  
Bruce Garstka

### Regular Meeting/Joint Meeting

Tuesday, October 15, 2024

6:00 PM

Town Hall Annex-Hybrid Format

#### I. CALL TO ORDER

The Regular/Joint meeting was called to order at 6:00 p.m.

#### II. ROLL CALL

Mr. Martic was appointed as a voting member.

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

Also in attendance was:  
Liz Burdick, Planning Director.  
Karen Parkinson, Historic District Commission.  
Justin DeBrodt, Inland Wetlands & Watercourses Commission.

#### III. JOINT DISCUSSION WITH MEMBERS OF VARIOUS COMMISSIONS, COMMITTEES AND BOARDS THROUGHOUT THE TOWN OF LEDYARD.

##### 1. Agricultural Commission Joint Work Session.

Chairman Garstka started the meeting by saying that the Commission is pushing to maintain green space either as farmland or forestry in an open and preserved state.

Chairman Garstka announced that the development rights for Paley Farm, in Sharon, CT was sold to the State in 1984. The farm was 183 acres and sold for \$300,000. Within the past two weeks a sign has been placed at the entrance of a new driveway to the farm. Also on the land was a new foundation which was approved by the Commissioner of the State Department of Agriculture. This development was never brought to the attention of the Public. The only reason the public became aware was because of the sign at the end of the driveway with the name of the architect who is building the house. Chairman Garstka said this sets a bad precedent and is very detrimental. He has contacted the State Senator and Joan Nichols, Executive Director of the Connecticut Farm Bureau. Liz Burdick, Planning Director, commented that she has seen

development rights sold before except for two acres on which to build a house, it's possible that is the case here. She said the only way to know if this was a similar case is to review the original development rights.

Karen Parkinson said she is speaking as a Commissioner of the Historic District Commission, the President of the Tri-Town Trail Association and as a private citizen of Ledyard. She said that the Town has a plan of Conservation and Development that must be completed every ten years. She emphasized the importance of the Town to have a vision of what the Town will look like in ten years, twenty-five years, fifty years, etc. Ms. Parkinson said there is a lot going on in Southeastern CT that could impact Ledyard such as EB development and the Riverwalk. Ms. Burdick said the Town last updated their POCD in 2018 or 2019. She said that Ledyard didn't hire professionals but rather the Commissioners wrote it and then it was referred to all Ledyard Commissions for review and comments. Ms. Burdick said next year she plans to start a discussion with Planning and Zoning on the POCD plan, adding that it is ideal to start looking at the plan every five years. Ms. Burdick said that Commissions are encouraged to make comments when the plan is referred to them. Ms. Parkinson said one of the things she would like Ledyard to add to their plan is a 55 and up community since there isn't any in Ledyard now, also a community center. Chairman Garstka said he believes smaller homes for a single resident or small family of three should be more available. Ms. Burdick said that there are plans in place to put one floor 55+ units and Habitat for Humanity housing in Ledyard Center. She said the Ledyard Center Sewer Extension project is moving along well, and it will bring more housing into Ledyard Center.

Ms. Parkinson said that she believes that Connecticut will see an influx of people from California and Florida, escaping places of natural disasters. Chairman Garstka said that it has already started to happen and gave an example of the number of movies now being filmed in Connecticut.

Chairman Garstka said there is new electronic sign in Ledyard Center. Perhaps the signs could be used for the Town's farms or vineyards. Advertising for local agricultural businesses in Town would be helpful.

Ms. Parkinson reported for the Historic District Commission that the Nathan Lester House will no longer have caretakers live in the house because of lead abatement issues.

Mr. Marelli reported as the Chairman for the Conservation Commission. He stated that last year Avalonia worked with the Commission and the former Town Planner to apply for an Open Space Watershed grant. The full grant was received. The Conservation Commission has been working in conjunction with Avalonia on a maintenance plan for Pike Marshall and Burton Trail. The plan is to connect the two trails and eventually connect with the Ledyard Center Multi-use Path. Mr. Marelli and another member from the Conservation Committee have been attending the Alliance for the Mystic River Watershed meetings to build a collaboration with the Alliance, Stonington, North Stonington, CT DEEP, Save the Sound, Avalonia, UCONN, SECCOG, and both Mohegan and Mashantucket Tribes to save the watersheds in the region. The Commission still works on trails and open spaces but are starting to pivot towards water quality as well.

Ms. Parkinson said the Tri-Town Trail is working on double blazing some trails. Chairman Garstka believes the horse stables in Town could benefit from the trail system.

Ms. Burdick said the Town will be switching to a CAI online system similar to Montville's GIS website and a cloud permit system. In the future every application for Wetlands, Planning, Zoning, Zoning Board of Appeals, Zoning and Building permits will be online. This online system will be consistent to what other Towns in the regions are already doing. There will be a kiosk and a scanner at the counter and an online account will need to be created.

Chairman Garstka thanked the representatives from other Commissions and departments for joining the meeting.

**RESULT:** DISCUSSED

**IV. CITIZENS COMMENTS**

**V. COMMENTS OF COMMISSION MEMBERS**

**1. Comments of Commission Members.**

None.

**VI. INFORMATIONAL ITEMS**

**1. Informational items.**

Mr. Marelli said some farmland is being lost to solar farms rather than housing developments.

**RESULT:** DISCUSSED

**VII. REVIEW AND APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

**1. Motion to APPROVE Regular Meeting Minutes from September 17, 2024, as written.**

**RESULT:** APPROVED AND SO DECLARED

**MOVER:** Bruce Garstka

**SECONDER:** Katie Yuhas

**AYE** 4 Yuhas Martic Garstka Marelli

**EXCUSED** 2 Angelini Holmberg

**ABSENT** 1 Thorne

**VIII. CORRESPONDENCE**

**1. Correspondence.**

None.

**IX. OLD BUSINESS**

- 1. Any other Old Business to come before the Commission.  
None.

**X. NEW BUSINESS**

- 1. Motion to APPROVE the Agricultural Commission 2025 meeting date calendar as written.

Ms. Yuhas asked if the Commission will keep the meetings every month and cancel as needed, Chairman Garstka answered yes. Chairman Garstka said he may cancel the December and January meetings.

Chairman Garstka said he was disappointed in the turnout for the Joint meeting and suggested holding the next one in April instead of in March. He added that he would like to speak to the Mayor and the Town Council to suggest holding a mandatory joint meeting proposed by the Town Council instead of the Agricultural Commission.

**RESULT:** APPROVED AND SO DECLARED

**MOVER:** Bruce Garstka

**SECONDER:** Katie Yuhas

**AYE** 4 Yuhas Martic Garstka Marelli

**EXCUSED** 2 Angelini Holmberg

**ABSENT** 1 Thorne

- 2. Connecticut Farm Bureau Renewal.

No comments.

- 3. Any other New Business to come before the Commission.

None.

**XI. ADJOURNMENT**

Motion to ADJOURN the Regular/Joint meeting at 7:29 p.m.

**RESULT:** APPROVED AND SO DECLARED

**MOVER:** Bruce Garstka

**SECONDER:** Michael E. Marelli

**AYE** 4 Yuhas Martic Garstka Marelli

**EXCUSED** 2 Angelini Holmberg

**ABSENT** 1 Thorne

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