

2014-06-10 Agriculture Commission Meeting Minutes

June 10, 2014

The meeting was called to order at 7:40 PM

Commissioners Present: Andrew Meek, Kelly Dennis, Verna Cole, Megan Johnson, Howard Hopps

Audience of Citizens: None

Approval of Minutes: K. Dennis will re-circulate February minutes and A. meek will circulate other meeting minutes for approval at July's meeting.

Unfinished/Continuing Business

a. Guest presentation by Elisabeth Moore of the Connecticut Farmland

Trust on Conservation Easements. Main points relevant to Sterling farmers and agriculture producers: 1) Sterling among the top 10 towns identified by the state for this smaller land program; 2) Preserves farm and agriculture associated with Town quality of life as open space in the future that might otherwise be sold for development; 3) Trust aimed at smaller farms of 30 acres or less that might not otherwise be of interest to the State for acquisition; 4) Proximity to open land increases property values and keeps taxes low.

b. Sterling has already met many of the requirements for participation including: 1) Establish an Agriculture Commission (2009); 2) Importance of agriculture to the town recognized in the 2009 POCD; 3) Inventory of local farmland resources, including 409 resources (performed by Ag Commission 2008 survey); 4) Local funding mechanism in place in the town budget (\$1.00 included in Town budget for Land Acquisition); 5) Soil assessment submitted to Natural Resources in Tolland.

c. Still remaining to be done: 1) Establish ranking criteria for producers (Moore can provide examples); 2) Town official submits application indicating that we are interested in participating in the program.

d. Application to participate does not commit the Town to funding/budgeting the 25% for Trust partnership purchases nor to agree to anything; it merely gives us access to Trust Partnership program resources, including land trust grants (e.g., Windham land trust or possibly RI adjacent property trusts) and keep open the Town's future options.

Initial proposed projects that do best are properties that are very visible and that community would be upset if they were lost: What properties do people in the town identify as central, as having a connection to, or that local and regional communities travel to, e.g., Scenic route 149, Ekonk Hill, etc.;

New Business:

a. Invite FFA Member to assume non-voting seat on the Ag Commission as previously voted. Discussion of inviting Kristin Morneau, other FFA officers.

b. Family Day—tabled until September meeting.

c. Farm Day—tabled until August meeting.

Any Other Business: Next meeting Tuesday, July 8, 2014 at 7:30 pm

Adjournment: M. Johnson made a motion, seconded by V. Cole to adjourn at 7:46 p.m. All voted in favor of the motion.