MINUTES
AGRICULTURE COMMISSION
MONDAY, JULY 6, 2026
MUNICIPAL OFFICE COMPLEX
MEETING ROOM 3
VIA YOUTUBE LIVE
7:00 P.M.
REGULAR MEETING

Attendees:

Commission Members:

Aaron P. Taylor (D), Chairman - present
Shaleen B. Thody (U), Secretary - present
Stephanie D. Cobleigh (D) - present
Rochelle A. Davis (D) - present
Ronald M. Distefano (R) - present

Alternates:

Patrick A. Capel (U) - present
Denise L. Dill (R)
Theresa B. Govert (D) - present

1. Call to order & Pledge of Allegiance
    a. Meeting called to order @ 7:04 pm by Aaron Taylor

2. Approval of the agenda
    a. Ron motion to approve
    b. Stephanie second
    c. All in favor. No abstain.

3. Approval of the draft minutes from June 1, 2026 meeting
    a. No comments or corrections
    b. Rochelle motion to approve
    c. Ron second
    d. All in favor. No abstain.

4. Chair's report
    a. No new items to report.

5. Correspondence
    a. Email from Erica Daurio about her hobby farm
        i. Request for resources for food safety and egg sales
        ii. Email forwarded to the commission
        iii. Guidance for the general farm stand folks
        iv. What is certifiable for restaurants?
        v. How can we help her? Connect to resources at the state level.
        vi. Produce safety certification - State of CT
        vii. Egg sales - only to a final sale, not restaurant.
            1. Is there a sterilization process?

2. How can we help?

viii. What are the food safety issues?
1. Storing safely for people to buy them.
2. What are the preparations/regulations? How can we communicate them?

6. New Business
   a. Heritage Market debrief (Stephanie)
      i. Suggestion to start a Facebook page / directory of local farm resources, skillsets, and services, including:
         1. Large engine, tractor and small equipment repair
         2. Large and specialty equipment owned locally – excavators, saw mill equipment, etc. for emergencies and planned projects
         3. Critter sitters for livestock, horses, chickens, etc.
         4. Specialty skillsets – midwifery for livestock, shearing, etc.
         5. Resource share – repurposing veg scraps for feed, offering barn clean-out's for compost, etc.
      ii. How can we connect everyone?
         1. Facebook
            a. Multiple administrators
         2. Member directory through the Facebook page
         3. A place for people to connect with workshare
         4. How can we use it to help people who are experiencing animal safety?
         5. People can list their skill sets possibly.
         6. Can we start a Facebook page for the Ag Commission?
            a. Who administers?
            b. No communicating and making decisions around this page.
            c. More research is needed.
            d. Talk to Lauren and Linda about rules and regulations about having a Facebook page.
            e. Stephanie and Rochelle.
               i. Moderation of the page needs to be carefully planned.
         7. Will we go again next month to Heritage Market?
            a. Last Wednesday of July. 3-7pm
            b. Collect emails
            c. Hang up sample of sign
            d. Awareness of the right to farm town.
         8. Thanks to Stephanie for attending!! Vendors register through EDC.
   b. Eightmile River Wild & Scenic Coordinating Committee (Pat /Stephanie/Rochelle)
      i. Ideas being collected in a group work format.
      ii. Stephanie suggested adding where we could add food stops to the trail systems.
      iii. Salmon River is included as well.
      iv. The meeting was all about gathering initial ideas. Collecting feedback for writing the new management plan.
      v. Water, water quality and water health were discussed.
      vi. People are interested in responsible agriculture. Can new farms use ecologically friendly practices?
      vii. Staying on top of messaging about the impact of farms on watersheds.
      viii. Comments from Todd Gelston
         1. Eightmile and Salmon River is dependent upon good farming practices. Herbicides and pesticides and fertilizer used responsibility. Residential people need to use these products responsibly.
         2. The right to farm allows people to spread things that don't smell too great but proper practices will help curb run-off and smells.

3. Todd encourages our future participation. No future date sent.

c. Community garden
    i. Info from Linda about current roles and responsibilities (Aaron)
        1. Ron - How is the water supply?
            a. Update needed
            b. The fire department is supposed to fill the tanker.
            c. What is the mechanism of communication/administration?
        2. Linda sent an email. The land use office manages the community garden.
        3. Todd Gelston thinks we need some reorganization of the community garden.
            a. Water needs - what are they?
            b. Tanks is 5500 gallons
            c. There is a well on the land - went dry in 1957 - to the west of the tanker.
            d. You need a champion of the garden and you need a point person.
        4. How do you communicate with the rest of the people in the Community Garden?
            a. How do you get rid of certain weeds?
            b. How do we communicate best practices?
        5. Theresa will help Rochelle - Garden Champions
    ii. Conservation Committee project for equipment shelter (Pat)
        1. This is part of the community garden discussion.
    iii. Sustainability team conversation at Heritage Market (Stephanie)
        1. Matching grants available. Theresa will
    iv. Representatives visiting? (Rochelle)
        1. No person in attendance.

7. Old Business
    a. Field Notes / East Haddam News
        i. Next submission - Rochelle and Stephanie will collaborate
            1. Possible safe egg handling practices
            2. Resources and basic guidance
                a. Emily Alger
                b. UCONN extension
                c. Department of Ag
    b. Right to Farm Signs
        i. Todd will be ordering the signs.
            1. Ordering 3 metal signs
            2. 2nd budget is July 1st
                a. $75 for the metal signs
                b. Mapped out 10 locations
        ii. Definition of the right to farm needs clarification in the town paper?
            1. What does it mean? What does it not mean?
            2. We will address this in a future article in the newspaper.
            3. Do this article when the signs go up?
        iii. Neighbors are not allowed to complain about noise that animals are making.
    c. Farmer Tax Incentives
        i. An investigation started by Todd Gelston about the impact of tax exemption on the town.
        ii. Has not gone to the select board
        iii. Next meeting of select board is Wednesday, July 15th
        iv. Would it not include residences?
        v. Ed Iarusso - comments from audience.

1. Woodstock reduced tax burden on farms.
2. Taxes on the building that are very expensive.
3. Does East Haddam have interest in getting it passed?
4. Bill with DRS
5. Municipalities can opt in

vi. Ag Commission made a formal recommendation to the town.
vii. Aaron has resources and research to offer

8. Public Comments
    a. Todd Gelston - comments
        i. Why can't you sell to restaurants?
            1. What do other states do?
            2. State government?
            3. What is the cause for selling to restaurants? - USDA
        ii. Agricultural costs
            1. Tractors are a big cost
            2. Mechanics are out there. Dealers know the technical details.
                a. Freelance mechanics
        iii. Veterinarians - huge problem in town
            1. Not many large animal vets anymore
            2. Upstate NY - becoming their own vets
            3. Subscribe to a magazine for education - Hoards Dairy Cattle Magazine
        iv. Right to Farm
            1. Farmers need to be responsible
                a. Pesticides
                b. Manure
                c. Herbicides

9. Adjournment
    a. Motion to adjourn - Shaleen
    b. Second - Ron