MINUTES
AGRICULTURE COMMISSION
MONDAY, OCTOBER 5, 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. Call to order @ 7:06 pm

2. Approval of the agenda
    a. Addition
    b. Motion to approve Patrick
    c. Second Shaleen
    d. All in favor

3. Approval of the draft minutes from July 6, 2026 meeting
    a. Motion to approve Patrick
    b. Second Ronald
    c. All in favor

4. Correspondence
    a. No correspondence

5. New Business
    a. Field Notes / East Haddam News submission drafted by Stephanie
        i. Needs title - Eggs-cellent advice.
        ii. Do-Ag will do a workshop in the spring if desired.
            1. Selling to restaurants requires candling and sanitizing in a certified facility.
        iii. Coordinate with the Sustainability committee on when we are submitting to the newspaper.
    b. Regional Agriculture Committee East Haddam representative
        i. Aaron Jan. ‘24- Jan. ‘25

ii. Run by the River-Cog - send representatives
    1. Policies
    2. Advocacy
iii. Looking for a new representative from East Haddam
    1. Once a month on Zoom
        a. Possibly third Thursday of every month
    2. Stephanie offered to join the committee
        a. Ron as a back-up representative using the publicly posted agenda
    3. Make an official recommendation to the Select Board to appoint a representative from East Haddam
        a. Aaron motion to add Stephanie
        b. Patrick second
        c. All in favor

c. Correspondence from Patrick about Land Trust vs. Farmland and how they do not have to be mutually exclusive.
    i. The question is how do we make Land Trust land stay as Farmland.
    ii. American Farmland trust - national organization involved in this movement.
    iii. A free webinar about the topic will be shared by Patrick.
    iv. It was discovered by the commission that there is an ordinance stating that there should be a member of the Agricultural Commission on the Open Space Committee
        1. We will add this to the agenda for next month.

6. Old Business
    a. Right to Farm Signs
        i. Todd Gelston - getting signs made is not a big deal
        ii. Todd Gelston - Putting signs on State Rd requires DOT approval
        iii. Review of locations of signs
        iv. 8/9 signs total
        v. Amalia - suggested Shagbark
        vi. Todd Gelston will work on 2-3 weeks
        vii. Yard signs for the “Right to Farm Sticker”
            1. Possibly Community match grant fund
            2. Sustainable CT will match up to $15,000
            3. 2-3 months to raise the money
            4. Investigate EMP apparel
    b. Farmer Tax Incentives
        i. Todd Gelston drafted exemptions
        ii. BOF reviewing
        iii. Attorney reviewing
        iv. Ordinance needed
        v. Distinguish farm machinery vs. farm buildings
            1. Exempt up to $250,000 - state law
            2. Going beyond would need an ordinance
        vi. Property exemption is a higher priority
        vii. Town meeting is a the legislative body that will approve and/or disapprove
            1. We can support at town meeting
    c. Heritage Market update
        i. Stephanie went to last one to hand out stickers
        ii. Feedback is that there is not local farmers at our town markets
        iii. Problem with Board of Health approval - Chatham Health District has their own rules.

iv. Possible coordination with the Sustainability Committee to allow farmers markets the same way we allow farm stands.
v. Todd will investigate the updates to the rules about selling locally grown produce.
1. Research needs to be done
2. Heritage Market is expensive, tough location
3. "Road - block" is going to be investigated by Todd Gelston who will report back to Aaron Taylor. Money, insurance, health, competition
4. $105 for a season from Chatham Health District
a. For prepared food or not?
5. Only a few vendors attended the Heritage Market.
a. How can we help support it?
b. Possibly recruit through the Newspaper article about next year's Heritage Market.
6. The culture of growing their own food could be a barrier to their Farmers Market. - Teresa Govert
7. Linda Z. - looked up the rules for the farmers market in Madison. Certificate of insurance needed. It is a barrier to get in. Most farm markets are not town-run.
8. Course of action - fully understand the rules, how can we support the Heritage, how can we find vendors, can we sponsor for little producers

d. Facebook page
i. Stephanie spoke with Lauren
ii. Moderator needed
iii. Should we stick to the newspaper articles
iv. Forum not needed at this time

e. Community Garden
i. Rochelle and Theresa went to the community garden in East Haddam
1. Biggest issue is the weed management
2. Theresa suggested a matching grant to bring in a professional to come up with a three year plan
a. Draft plan for the next meeting
ii. Amalia
1. Community garden history
a. Top soil taken?
b. Has a lot of Mugwort
c. Town mows - 2xs
d. The town will rototill, but parts cannot be tilled due to rocks.
e. Some are not usable as plots.
2. Two wells on the property
a. One capped? One covered?
b. The Sustainability team has money to run the wells again by solar.
iii. Map of the Plots shown to the committee by Linda Z.
1. Grounds crew is an issue
2. Commercial rental is available
3. Could we bring in topsoil?
4. Composting is a problem with DEEP on public property.
5. Property is not supposed to have fruit trees
6. Town has actual leases on the property
7. Port-o-let cost
8. Town breaking even. Supposed to be self-sufficient.

7. Public Comments
a. Amalia

        i. Pollinator pathways
        ii. Homegrown national park

8. Adjournment
    a. Shaleen motion to adjourn
        i. Second Stephanie
        ii. All in favor