

Town of Woodbridge Agriculture Commission
Meeting Minutes | Tuesday February 09, 2021
Zoom Meeting

All Agricultural Commission members (Kristyna Hulland, Steve Munno, Chris Sorenson, Leland Jr. Torrence, and Andrea Urbano) present, as well as BOS Liaison, Mica Cardozo.

8:02 PM: Meeting begins

1. Commission reviews and approves minutes from Jan 12th meeting

2. Nominations: Vice Chair and Secretary:

- Kristyna nominates Andrea Urbano for Vice Chair
 - Leland seconds
 - Unanimous vote
- Kristyna suggests the Commission shares the responsibilities of Secretary. Chris clarifies the position of secretary will be shared between Leland Jr., Steve, and Kristyna.
 - Steve seconds
 - Unanimous vote

3. Meeting dates:

- The Agriculture Commission will meet once a month, the second Tuesday at 8 PM between October and April, with special meetings called as necessary between May and September. All meetings will be virtual until further notice.
 - The October meeting will be a “light” meeting, with no big items on the agenda.
 - The Commission will try to meet at least once at a member’s farm between May and September.
 - Specific upcoming 2021 meeting dates are: March 09th, April 12th, May- September special meetings as needed, and October 12th
- Chris Motions
- Kristyna seconds
- Unanimous vote

4. Town owned property leased by farmers:

- A. Length of lease. Currently 1 year lease agreements between Town and farmers
- Chris suggests increasing lease agreements to 3 years, though he states 5 year leases would be ideal
 - i. Kristyna recommends 5 years – as this would increase the eligibility for farmers to benefit from CT’s Farmland Restoration Program (FLRP). As such, 5 year leases would more effectively enhance farmer investment into leased land. Farmers with access to their land for at least 5 years are eligible for the State’s 90% cost with 10% match from lease holder. Lease holder will still need to get permission from town.

- ii. Steve agreed with Krystina's suggestion and provided more information about the FLRP. Steve emphasized how the 5 year lease terms could really benefit farmers and the town.
- iii. Leland agrees the lease lengths should be extended and stresses this importance. He proposes 5 to 10 year lease terms for some farms, and perhaps 1 year for others and alternative option.
- iv. Chris – summarizes discussion – states that a 5 year lease would benefit farmer and enhance stewardship of town land
- v. Chris asked Mica about the process of requesting this change to the Town
 - Mica emphasized the importance of explaining to the BOS the benefits of 5 year leases in the context of FLRP. He suggested we pursue this change within the next four months.
 - Mica also suggested reaching out to other farmers before pursuing change – how do they feel about it? Do they agree? Their support will help our case with the BOS.
 - He also posed the thought that if lease lengths are increased, than should the lease rate increase as well? He also stated that there would have to be language in the lease that would allow the town to make changes to property use – example provided: Fitzgerald Property Dog Park. Chris expresses that if that's the case, some protocol should be put in place that requires the Town to consult the lessee/farmer prior to making decisions.
 - Steve asked Mica if we should write a formal or specific request to the Town. Mica suggested reaching out to Jerry Weiner to provide guidance about what should be included.
 - Mica explains once written – it should be treated as a motion-able item – the Ag Commission would need to vote on it before bringing it to BOS
- Chris makes a motion to get on the BOS agenda for March to present our request for lease length extensions and related lease updates.
- Leland Jr. Seconds
- Unanimous Vote

B. Uses of property:

- Chris brought up, but no real discussion took place.

C. Farmer Database:

- Andrea presented idea to develop a geo-referenced database of Woodbridge farmers – this would serve as a resource for the consumer market, and for the Ag Commission to make more informed decisions. This would include mapping farms and potential areas for future farms (fallow fields, prime agricultural soils, etc.)
- Kristyna and Mica shared that the Town has already compiled a list and created a map, but stated the value in having a greater virtual presence, and a map that can function as a living document. Steve shared CTNOFA's list and map of CT Farmers.

- Andrea will acquire databases from Gerry Shaw and Betsy Yagla and will begin the process of developing our own database.

5. Other business:

- Andrea suggests the need for members to consider advertising and marketing the Commission's existence. Farmers and other community members should know we're a resource.
- Leland Jr. agrees. A brief discussion took place.

9:07 PM Meeting Adjourned