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ENFIELD AGRICULTURAL COMMISSION
MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING
TUESDAY, October 11, 2016

A Regular Meeting of the Enfield Agricultural Commission was called to order by Chair Karen LaPlante in the Enfield Town Hall, 820 Enfield Street, Enfield, Connecticut on Tuesday, October 11, 2016 @ 7:06 PM.

ROLL CALL

Secretary Kathy Vose took the roll.

Present were Commissioner McGuire, Chair LaPlante, Commissioner Cote, Commissioner Dynia (8:05) Commissioner Vose, Commissioner Pfeifer-Hall, Commissioner Kneiss and Commissioner Wyzga.

Also present: Karen Timpone – Recording secretary, Katherine Winslow – Department of Agriculture Community Farmland Preservation Program, Jennifer Pacacha - Assistant Town Planner and Guests - Ken Edgar - Bill Lee (8:35) – Richard Szewczak (8:55)

Approval of Minutes - Commissioner Vose made a motion to approve the minutes of September 13, 2016 – seconded by Commissioner Pfeifer-Hall – No discussion – Commissioner Cote abstained – Passed unanimously 6/0/1.

Chair LaPlante empowered Commissioner Kneiss as a voting member in this meeting.

Public Hearing – None.

Public Participation - This is an open discussion regarding The Community Farmland Preservation Program.

Commissioner Pfeifer-Hall made a motion to skip to agenda #9A – seconded by Commissioner Kneiss. No further discussion.

a. Farms and Farmland Preservation – Special Guest Katherine Winslow from the Department of Agriculture was at the meeting to explain and give information regarding The Community Farmland Preservation Program. She explained the State has two Purchase of Development Rights Programs. One, being the Farmland Preservation Program and the second, more recent, being the Community Farms Preservation Program. Purchase of Development Rights – means purchasing a certain amount of legal rights regarding a piece of property. When this is done a deed gets recorded on land records and it is there in perpetuity, it runs with the land and certain restrictions are put on the land to maintain the land for agricultural use only and management must be in accordance with a conservation plan. This is usually done with the US Department of Agriculture’s Natural Resources Conservation Service. Typically there is no division or subdivision of the land once it is restricted in this way. There could also be some more restrictions as per the recorded deed, ie., structures or have a farmstead area around the existing residence on the property. A value is placed on the property highest and best use unrestricted (market value or before value) then the same appraiser appraises the property for its agricultural value based on the said

restrictions that are agreed to in the Deed that gets recorded (after restriction value.) The difference between those two values is called the Development Rights Value. It is then reviewed and an offer is made based on no more than Development Rights value - typically a little bit less.

Goals for the program are to preserve 130,000 acres of farmland throughout the state and of that being 85,000 acres of cropland. Currently they are at 42,000 + acres.

Katherine explained the process of how a farm might move through the program and ultimately be preserved.

Application is obtained –

If it scores properly – they negotiate a farm configuration agreement – what the farm is going to look like in the future in terms of structures, building envelopes, how much land is going to be included and persevered within and how much might be excluded.

Obtain preliminary Certificate of Title to make sure there are no major issues for them to purchase development rights.

It is appraised – and an offer is made to purchase development rights and if agreed to by the landowner it is then signed.

State approval is needed, funding approved through Department of Administrative Services – an A2 boundary survey – a final title search – and ready to purchase development rights.

The EAC can assist the farmer in filling out the application.

The Community Farms Preservation program is the small farms program. Fairly similar to the current program but they now consider locally important farmland soils in addition to prime and statewide importance farmland soils. The towns must show joint interest and produce a letter of support for the preservation of the parcel and joint cost share. The towns have to establish a town agriculture commission, inventory the town's farmland resources and establish criteria/ranking system, and it must be funded with at least \$1. They apply to the US Department of Agriculture's Natural Resources Conservation Service for locally important farmland soils designation, and enter into a cooperative letter of agreement for joint partnership with the State of Connecticut. The EAC has done all of this and is ready to go.

The Community Farmland Preservation Programs can partner with or get assistance from the state program, land trusts and the federal farmland program.

There is a farm viability grant deadline coming up – The deadline is November 14, 2016 – Maximum grant award is \$49,000. There were three workshops the next one is Friday October 14, 2016 930 - 1130 at the Hartford Regional Market Conference Room.

If there are 1,000 acres of active farmland within a 3 miles radius the state will typically pay 75% and the town will pay 25% (which is the lowest town cost share to participate with the state program.) All acquisitions are contingent on funding (both town and state) and approval by the Town Managers.

The time frame is approximately 1 ½ to 2 years or more.

Application

Letter of support from Town

Certificate of title

Appraisal costs approximately \$4,000 to \$5,000 and usually two appraisals are done. The state will review the appraisal and determine what they will offer.

Once the farmer agrees and signs the state will move the process through.

Funding for this can be done by farmland trusts, general fund, open space fund, special fund, bond referendum, private funding.

Katherine ended her presentation at 8:45.

Chair LaPlante suggested that the EAC apply for the Farm Viability Grant for Community Garden on the Shaker Rd./Elm Street property behind Walgreens – have an assessment done of the property - possibly use the barn for farm stands, etc. Chair LaPlante will call Ed Pawlak to see if he could assess the land for farming and the vernal pools on the land. This must be submitted by November 14, 2016. Commissioner Vose will attend the workshop on Friday, October 14, 2016 for the Farm Viability Grant.

Commissioner Dynia reported The Urban Green/Community Garden Initiative is offering a grant. Applications are due February 2, 2017.

Correspondence / All Commissioners – Commissioner Dynia reported there is an information session on DEEP Open Space and Watershed Acquisition and also includes Community Gardens - meeting on October 13, 2016 10 – 12 in Windsor – Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station – The first hour of the meeting is regarding the open space grant, second hour will focus on Urban Green/Community Garden Program grant.

Commissioner Pfeifer-Hall suggested the February meeting be set regarding Community Farmland Preservation Program for the farmers in town. This will be discussed and setup at the next meeting.

Approval of Invoices – None.

Reports of Officers, Committees and Staff – None.

New Business – None.

Next Meeting Date - Wednesday, November 9, 2016

Adjournment – Motion to adjourn was made by Commissioner Kneiss, seconded by Commissioner Wyzga – No discussion – passed unanimously – Adjourned at 9:10