

AGRICULTURE COMMITTEE
Mansfield Town Hall
Conference Room B
7:30 pm
Minutes
November 5, 2013

1. Meeting was called to order at 7:35 pm
2. Attendance: Al Cyr, Charlie Galgowski, Ed Hall, Bryan Kielbania, Shep Stearns, Kathleen Paterson and Jennifer Kaufman (staff).
3. Minutes of the October meeting were approved unanimously.
4. No public comment received
5. Old Business
 - Mansfield Tomorrow Update- Jennifer updated members regarding Mansfield Tomorrow. A draft plan should be ready by early December for committee review and comment.
 - Agriculture Leases
 - **Town Council Meeting 11/12-** Jennifer said that the Ag Leases would not be on the 11/12 TC agenda. Instead, they will be on the 11/25 agenda. The Town Council will be asked to refer the leases to PZC for an 8-24 review. The TC will then hopefully accept the leases at their first December meeting.
 - **Baxter Road long term lease request-**As discussed at an earlier meeting, Shundahai Farm has requested a longer term lease for the Baxter Property. The RFP that was published stated that the Town will execute a five-year lease agreement with an option to extend once for five additional years. The RFP also stated that the either the Town or the applicant may suggest an alternate lease term.

Shundahai Farm, requested that the term of their lease be extended for 35 years to allow them to use the land to its full potential. They are interested in expanding their farm, which currently supports 170 families. Currently they grow vegetables. As part of this expansion, they would establish an orchard and other fruit crops that would take 3-10 years to become fully established and pasture animals to provide milk and meat, improve organic matter in the soil, and allow for carbon sequestration. To protect their crops from deer and contain the animals they would need to install fencing. They would amend the soil, drill a well and develop an irrigation system. They estimate that for the fencing, well, and irrigation system, they would need to invest between \$24,000 and \$36,000. This represents a significant long-term time and financial investment that could not be recouped in the standard 5 to 10-year lease. In addition to the above, they are considering a pick your own operation.

The Agriculture Committee reviewed their proposal and business plan. After a great deal of discussion, Paterson motioned to offer them a 10 year lease with an option to renew for an additional 10 years, provided they demonstrated that they had made a significant investment in the property. The motion was seconded by Kielbania. They felt that this was fair to other farmers that only received a 5 year lease with an option to renew for an additional 5 years. Also, they suggested that the amount of investment and proper stewardship should be a consideration in reviewing the RFPs after the second 10 year term. The motion passed with Cyr, Kielbania, Hall, Stearns, and Paterson in favor and Galgowski opposed. Charlie Galgowski

stated that he opposed because he felt that the Town should be offering long term leases to allow for proper stewardship of the property and to make land available to farmers with viable businesses.

- **Hunting on leased lands-** At the August 2013 meeting the Agriculture Committee requested that staff look into whether or not farmers who lease land from the Town could allow hunting to prevent crop damage. . For many of the Town's farmers, deer are significantly impacting farm viability by damaging crops. However, it may not be feasible to allow hunting because of liability, size of the properties, proximity to recreational uses and housing. After discussions with the Town's insurance carrier, CT Interlocal Risk Management Agency (CIRMA), staff feels that if a farmer is experiencing significant damage due to deer, they request that the Town consider allowing hunting on the property. If the lessee could demonstrate that the hunting was in compliance with a crop damage permit issued by CT DEEP and the Town could be held harmless, then the committee or staff could bring this issue to the Town Council for review on a site by site basis.

6. New Business

- Al Cyr motioned to add the Laguardia Easement to the property. Galgowski seconded . Motion passed unanimously. Jennifer updated the committee on the Laguardia property acquisition and stated that the Town was working with Joshua's Trust to put a permanent easement on the property that would protect the natural, cultural/ historic, and agricultural resources on the property. The easement would allow farming activities pursuant to CGS 1-1(q), the state's definition of agriculture. Currently there is a hay field on the property.

3. Executive Session in accordance with CGS section 1-200(6)(D)

- Sale or purchase of real property
- Discussion of possible site selection

The committee went into executive session at 8:45 pm and came out at 9:05 pm. Recommendations will be forwarded to the Town Council.

7. Future Agendas

- Easement Projects-to be discussed in January.
- Coordination with other Agriculture Commissions- Jennifer announced that the AGvocate program would be having a workshop for new and beginning farmers on Nov. 21. Part of this meeting will be a joint meeting of other Town Agriculture Commissions.
- Upcoming Workshops
- Outreach Projects- The committee would like to have another farmers forum in Feb. They will discuss this at the Dec. meeting.

8. Announcements

- Committee Updates-none

9. Adjourn- The meeting adjourned at 9:30 pm.