

Minutes
Meeting of the Easton Agricultural Commission
May 12, 2021 7:45 p.m. via Zoom

In attendance Jean Stetz-Puchalski, Denise Hebner, Victor Alfandre, Matt Oricchio, Lori Cochran Dougall, Irv Silverman

Absent: Sage Rega

I: Call to Order – 7:50 p.m.

II: Approval of Minutes from Last Meeting – Matt Oricchio made a motion. Lori Cochran Dougall 2nd. Motion passed unanimously.

III: Public Comment – Brittany Conover mentioned the CT Farm Bureau is seeking new members. Dolly Curtis of Citizens for Easton to hear update for the Easton Farm Preservation Project.

VI: Updates & Reports

- Jean Stetz- Puchalski reminded the Ag Commission members that the BCC Contact forms need to be submitted and to get sworn in by the Easton Town Clerk.
- Jean Stetz-Puchalski provided Covid updates on guidelines posted to the Agriculture Commission page on Town website. Denise Hebner volunteered to help with website updates.
- Farmers offered covid pandemic success stories: Shaggy Coo's and Silverman's have returned to a seasonal business without the bulk buying behavior seen earlier in the pandemic.
- Discussed and took action to follow Board of Selectmen (BoS) advice to shift member and alternate status of Commission members. Lori Cochran Dougall is changing to an Alternate status. Victor Alfandre made a motion to make Denise Hebner a full member and Recording Secretary; Lori Cochran Dougall 2nd. Motion passed unanimously. Jean will submit requested update to BoS.
- Discussed Farmland Preservation Project: Project is in the next phase as we work toward close. Invoices noting the final amount due from each funding partner were distributed on April 28, 2021. The final numbers and contributions amounts are as follows: 37.29 acres at \$14,600 per acre = \$544,434 total to purchase of the development rights. USDA-NRCS = \$350,000, State of Connecticut (75% match) = \$145,825.50, Connecticut Farmland Trust (12.5% match) = \$24,304.25, Town of Easton (12.5% match) = \$24,304.25. Christine Calvert, Town of Easton Financial Director and Treasurer, will process Easton's check. The next phase of the deal is the final filing and approval of paperwork by the CT Attorney General's office and conveyance of the development rights deed to the Town of Easton. The receipt and recording of the deed by the Easton Town Clerk will mark the closure of the Farmland Preservation deal, which is estimated to happen by August 1, 2021.
- Farming on Town Land Project: SSES project discussed. The land was tilled with cover crop planted. The Ag Com reviewed proposal submitted by Jake Conover and Irv Silverman to accept SSES lease transfer. Lori Cochran Dougall recommended a pollinator pathway with Jean Stetz-Puchalski recommending a Founder's Plot using CT NOFA seeds. Victor Alfandre made a motion to accept the updated proposal. Lori Cochran Dougall 2nd. Motion passed unanimously. Jean Stetz-Puchalski will meet the request from the BoS to submit the updated proposal with Ag Com recommendations to transfer lease from Speckled Rooster Farm to Silverman's Farm at an upcoming BoS meeting.

V: Correspondence: Silverman's Proposal. Invoice.

VI: New Business

- Victor Alfandre provided an update on the South Park proposal to grow Hemp. He will invite South Park Advisory committee and farmer to attend the next Ag Com and share the proposal so we may offer our advisory input to the Town. Jean reported that Kip Kolesinskas, Conservation Scientist at the CT Farmland Trust/co-chair of Working Lands Alliance and Will O'Meara, CT Field

INSTR # M2021000443 REC'D 05/23/2021 10:44:19 AM
CHRISTINE CALVERT TOWN CLERK EASTON CT

Agent, Land For Good, did a site walk of South Park in April to encourage interest in leasing property to farmers seeking land to farm. Town planner partnered on the site walk. Jean, in advance of next meeting, will provide notes from that site walk including guidance to Town on recommended site improvements to make the lease of the property more attractive to potential farmers.

VII: Adjournment Jean Stetz-Puchalski made the motion. Lori Cochran Dougal 2nd to adjourn meeting at 9:22 p.m.

Minutes submitted by Denise Hebner, Recording Secretary, *Denise Hebner*

Attachments: Town of Easton invoice - Barney Farm Preservation

Ag Com Farming on Town Land Plot A B SSES Project Silvermans Proposal



Connecticut Farmland Trust
77 Buckingham Street
Hartford, CT 06106

INVOICE
Date
April 28, 2021

Bill to:

Town of Easton
Attn: Christine Calvert
225 Center Road
Easton, CT 06612

Description	Amount	Pay to
Barney farm (Lakeview Orchards) preservation	\$12,152.12	Joan Barney
	\$12,152.13	David Barney
	Total: \$24,304.25	

Instructions:

Please write two separate checks: one for Joan Barney and one for David Barney. Please mail both checks to the Connecticut Farmland Trust office at the address below:

Connecticut Farmland Trust
Attn: Kathleen Doherty
77 Buckingham Street
Hartford, CT 06106

PLEASE NOTE: The preservation of Lakeview Orchards is subject to final approval by the CT Attorney General's office. The Town's checks will not be cashed by the Barneys until the Conveyance of Development Rights deed has been recorded at Easton Town Hall. The checks will be securely stored at the Connecticut Farmland Trust office until the closing is scheduled, at which time they will be delivered to the office of the attorney representing the State, to be delivered to the Barneys.

77 Buckingham Street
ph: 860.247.0202



Hartford, CT 06106
fax: 860.247.0236

Silverman's Farm Proposal
Farming on Town Land Plot A & B: SSES Morehouse Project

Description:

Samuel Staples school is a true embodiment of the town of Easton and the community. The school built to look like a barn, has large fields on its forefront approximately 4 acres, making for an ideal focal point that is not only functional but also sustainable.

For years, the Easton Ag commission has been responsible for ensuring the property is cultivated and taken care of. Oftentimes done by a local farmer in town they are also asked to provide some type of educational component for students as well as keeping it cosmetically appealing.

Silverman's is excited to have been selected for the opportunity. After speaking with some of the commission it was made clear that a community project was always dreamt of for the property. Below is a timeline of the events Silverman's is planning along with some of the ideas for community engagement.

Year 1+

Silverman's will be approaching the 2021 season with "Soil health" being the moto. We will be planting a series of cover crops. Cover crops serve a critical role in today's agriculture. Oftentimes planted to hold the soil steadfast during winter months or while the land is not being used to grow cash crops. They are also used to aerate the soil or help make other nutrients available to the next crops planted.

While planting the cover crops, we will be able to educate regarding each cover crop's role as well as the benefits they provide to the soil, including microbial health essential to maintaining soil, and pollinator health. We will be doing this with the local schools in person as well as videos we will post on our social media to show people what we are doing and educate them regarding soil health.

We will also be using this space to be the home of our Csalad (Hungarian for family) garden. This will be the second year for the gardens; the gardens include the raised bed, soil, and plants. During the season we send out videos featuring farmer Jake weekly to demonstrate how to care for the gardens and what to look for. In addition, we answer any questions people might have regarding the garden or general plant health.

Summary:

We would like to invite community stakeholders to be a part of our venture with this Farming on Town land project of the Agricultural Commission. Utilizing videos, other materials, and activities happening at SSES plots, Farmer Jake will capture and broadcast to the community the excitement of what is happening with the project. Helping grow a better awareness of agriculture and all that it has to offer to students, parents, teachers, and the community at large.