



AGRICULTURAL
COMMISSION
FOR THE TOWN
OF EASTON
CONNECTICUT

Commission Members

Jean Stetz-Puchalski,
Chair

Victor Alfandre,
Recording Secretary

Laurel Fedor

Sal Gilbertie

Irv Silverman

Alternates:

Lori Cochran Dougall

Ray Longo



INSTR # M2016000405
DATE FILED 06/20/2016 11:05:07 AM
CHRISTINE HALLORAN
TOWN CLERK
EASTON CT

Minutes
Meeting of the Easton Agricultural Commission
June 8, 2016 -8:00 p.m.
Town Hall-Meeting Room A

In attendance: Jean Stetz-Puchalski, Victor Alfandre, Laurel Fedor, Ray Longo, Irv Silverman.

Absent: Lori Cochran-Dougall, Sal Gilbertie,

Public: Tim Brady

I: Call to Order: 8:00 pm

II: Minutes: Motion to approve by Laurel Fedor, 2nd by Ray Longo, approved unanimously

III: Updates & Reports:

- Review of draft of updated P&Z regs. VA raised question of the 12/20 restrictions. What counts? Where did these #'s come from? Does the count reset?
- Concerns with p.64-5: "special activities" too broadly defined and includes many normal farming operations. Proposed regulation of existing activities increases hardship on farmers. Non-conforming status puts undue burden on property owner.
- Attend P&Z meeting on 6/27 for unveiling of draft regulations.
http://www.eastonct.gov/sites/eastonct/files/file/file/pz_-_draft_easton_zoning_regulations_05312016_-_public_information_meeting_06272016.pdf

Correspondence: see attached

- Steve Reviczky, DoAg commissioner, wrote a letter to P&Z pledging support from the state level in updating our local regs. Jason Bowza will review our draft proposal. JSP sent a thank you note.
- LCD surveyed local farmers and compiled a list of 9 main items of concern.

IV New Business:

Discussed idea of community garden plots. Plan to revisit Sal's plot plan and talk to Tom Sherwood about HKMS. Commission will solicit interest from the community for a pilot program.

V Public Comment:

Tim Brady shared his comments/concerns with the draft regulations:

P.9 truck garden verbiage

P. 11 removed restriction on farm equip as commercial vehicle

P.12 equine introduced

P. 22 dropped 10 acre restriction for equine (good wording for farm stands as well)

"Best management practices" a should be replaced by "generally accepted ag practices."

P. 22/26 special permit vs site plan for equine facilities. Are they synonyms as implied in appendix p3?

P. 30 define farm store as one entity. Size and parking...

"grown and raised" eliminates processing (wool sweater). Produce can't be refrigerated and many other inconsistencies.

P. 34 accessory structure not consistent with farm store limits

P. 59 driveway regs

P. 63 removed exclusions for fruit trees and maple syrup

P. 64-5 shift from ag. to town regs

P. 66 Wineries--leave language alone for now

P.69 signage allowed on public right of ways

P.74 improvement on parking but p.76 further restricts parking

P. 84 non-conforming structures

Adjournment: 9:50 PM

Minutes submitted by Victor Alfandre, Recording Secretary *Victor Alfandre*

May 23, 2016

Collective input and concerns from Easton Farmer for your consideration:

1. Concerned that the Town will create too many regulations making it too difficult and expensive to farm.
2. We find the state and Aquarion regulations to be strict and they check up on us regularly. Could we use their guidelines and save everyone time?
3. In the last meeting, we heard the term "unit" used for animals. This metric does not represent farming today. It is not what the State recommends. We have feed delivered or can pick it up - our animals do not live off the land like they did in the old days.
4. Please do not over regulate us and create costly special permit requirements. It will cost both us time and money - the state has guidelines and enforcement that can help so we do not need too many special permits.
5. Concerned about regulations around signage in town. We have seasonal products and would like to be able to have our signage change to reflect our offerings.
6. When we have a bad years, or years when our crops fail. It would be very helpful if we could host an event or create some way to have supplemental income to get us through.
7. If it is not broken, then why are we trying to change it? Easton has been an ag town for a long time. Why do they want to change it now? You don't hear complaints around farming so I hope they don't want to create so many laws that result in issues.
8. Please think of all farmers as equal. Large and small farmers all work the land, feed their families, support the town and create jobs in this community - whether it be 2 or 20 workers, Treating us, regardless if we are produce, livestock, or equine, the same is crucial in creating a sustainable and supportive agriculture community.
9. We have many farms more than 50, 100 and even 200 years old. Why is the Town always talking about protecting the "residents" of our town? We are also "residents", and it would be nice to hear our Town talk about trying to protect all of us!



STATE OF CONNECTICUT
DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
Office of the Commissioner



Steven K. Reviczky
Commissioner

860-713-2500
www.CTGrown.gov

June 7, 2016

Mr. Robert Maquat, Chairman
Planning & Zoning Commission
225 Center Road
Easton, CT 06612

Dear Mr. Maquat,

I understand from your Agricultural Commission that Easton is undertaking a periodic review of its Planning & Zoning regulations and that included in this review will be a possible update to the agricultural portion of the current regulations. I am particularly pleased to hear that Easton is looking to focus on its agricultural heritage and support farming in the community. As you may be aware, agriculture is growing throughout Connecticut as residents look to buy agricultural products closer to home. I am writing to offer my assistance and our team to assist you in your review of Easton's regulations.

One question that I understand has been asked concerns the availability and applicability of state statute, regulation and resources to support compliance. Connecticut has a suite of existing statutes and regulations that fully address production agriculture. Connecticut General Statutes 1-1(q) defines farming and agriculture, and was intentionally written as a broad statement to capture the breadth and depth of Connecticut agriculture. There are numerous statutes and regulations that apply to farming activities specifically. Chief among them are CGS 19a-341 commonly known as "the Right to Farm;" Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection water pollution control statutes; and the State of Connecticut Public Health Code. Taken in concert, these statutes and regulations have historically protected Connecticut's land, water and public health.

The Department of Agriculture is staffed with highly trained professionals actively engaged with communities across the state, working with community leaders and farm families to grow Connecticut farms.

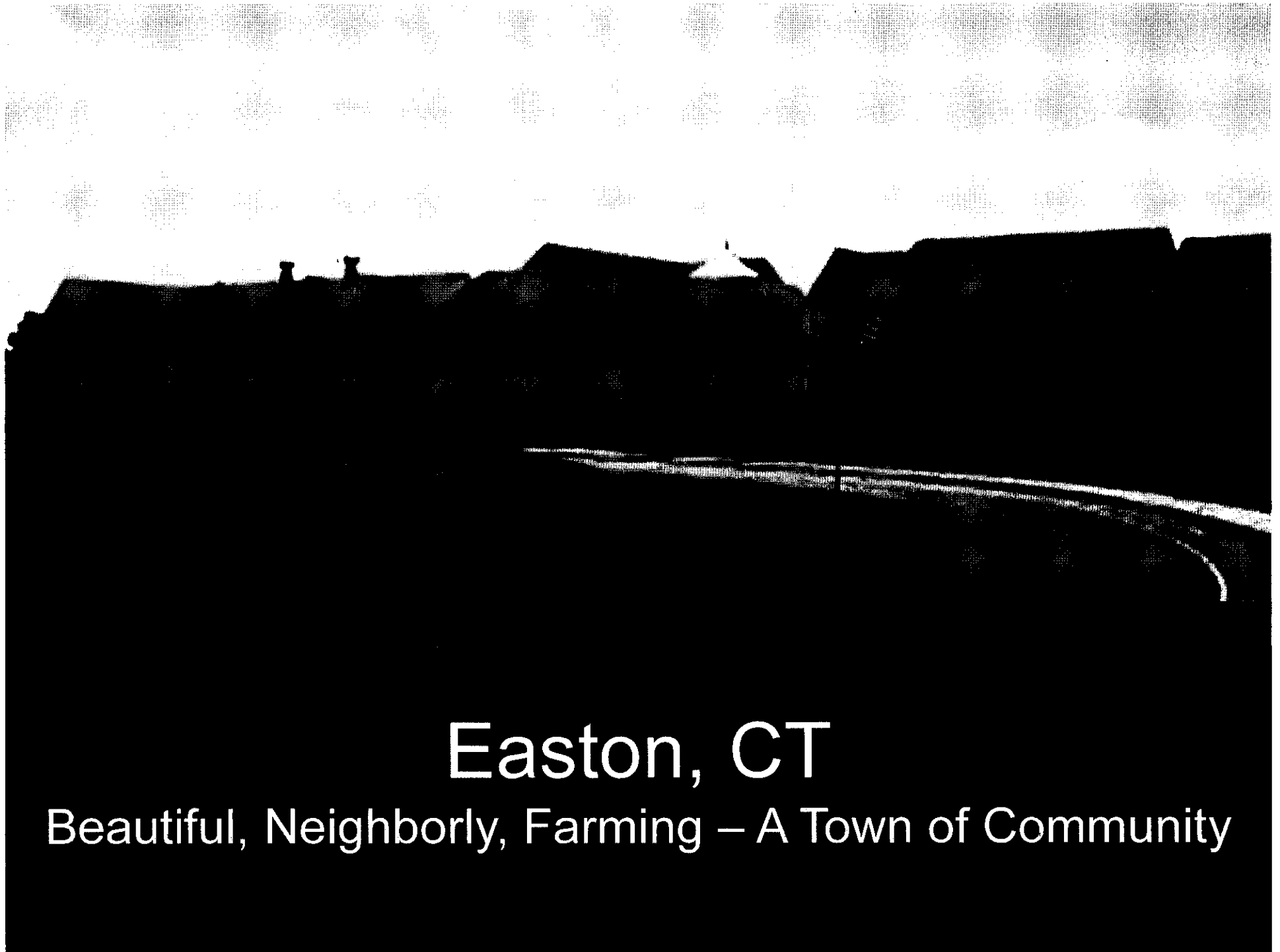
Reviewing and updating town regulations is a major project for any municipality. The Department of Agriculture recommends referencing existing state statutes and regulations to the greatest extent possible. Many municipalities have found this not only simplifies their workload, but gives them the opportunity to utilize and leverage fully vetted and legally tested language. Other communities have followed this path with much success.

Please feel free to contact my office with additional questions as you work through your review and update of local regulation and policies.

Sincerely,


Steven K. Reviczky
Commissioner

165 Capitol Avenue, Hartford, CT 06106

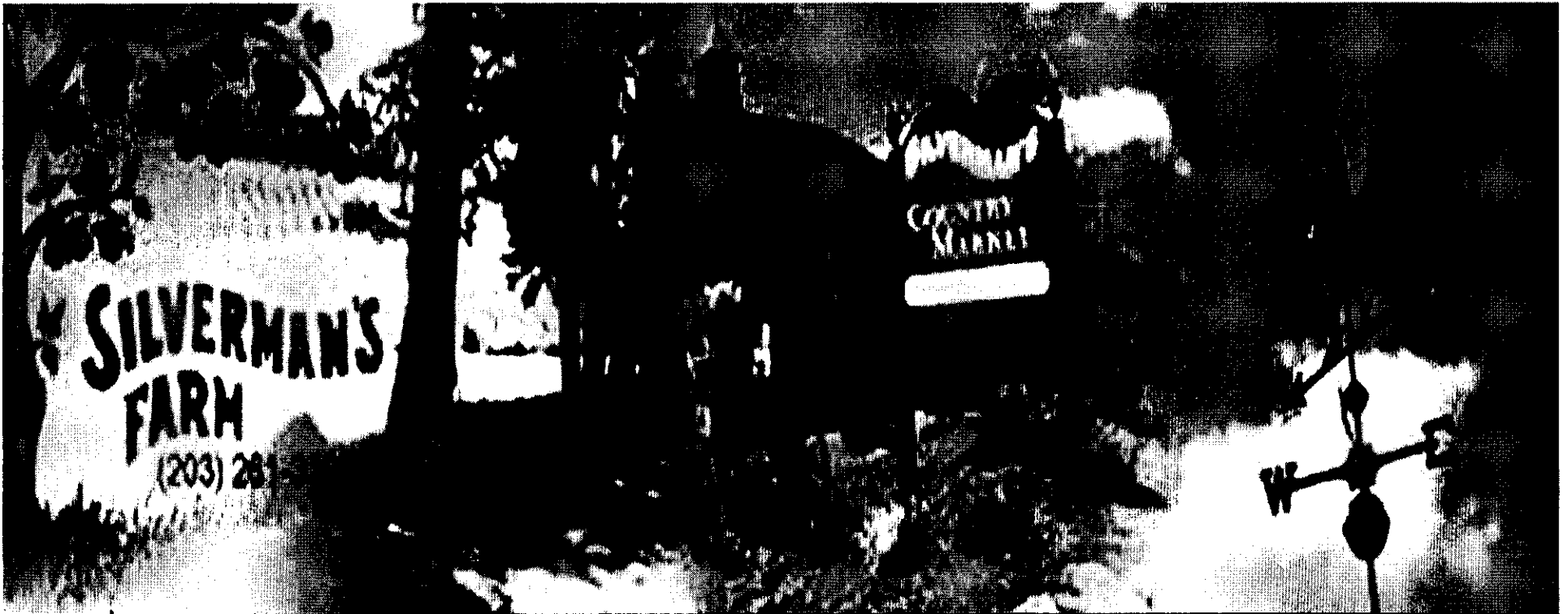


Easton, CT

Beautiful, Neighborly, Farming – A Town of Community

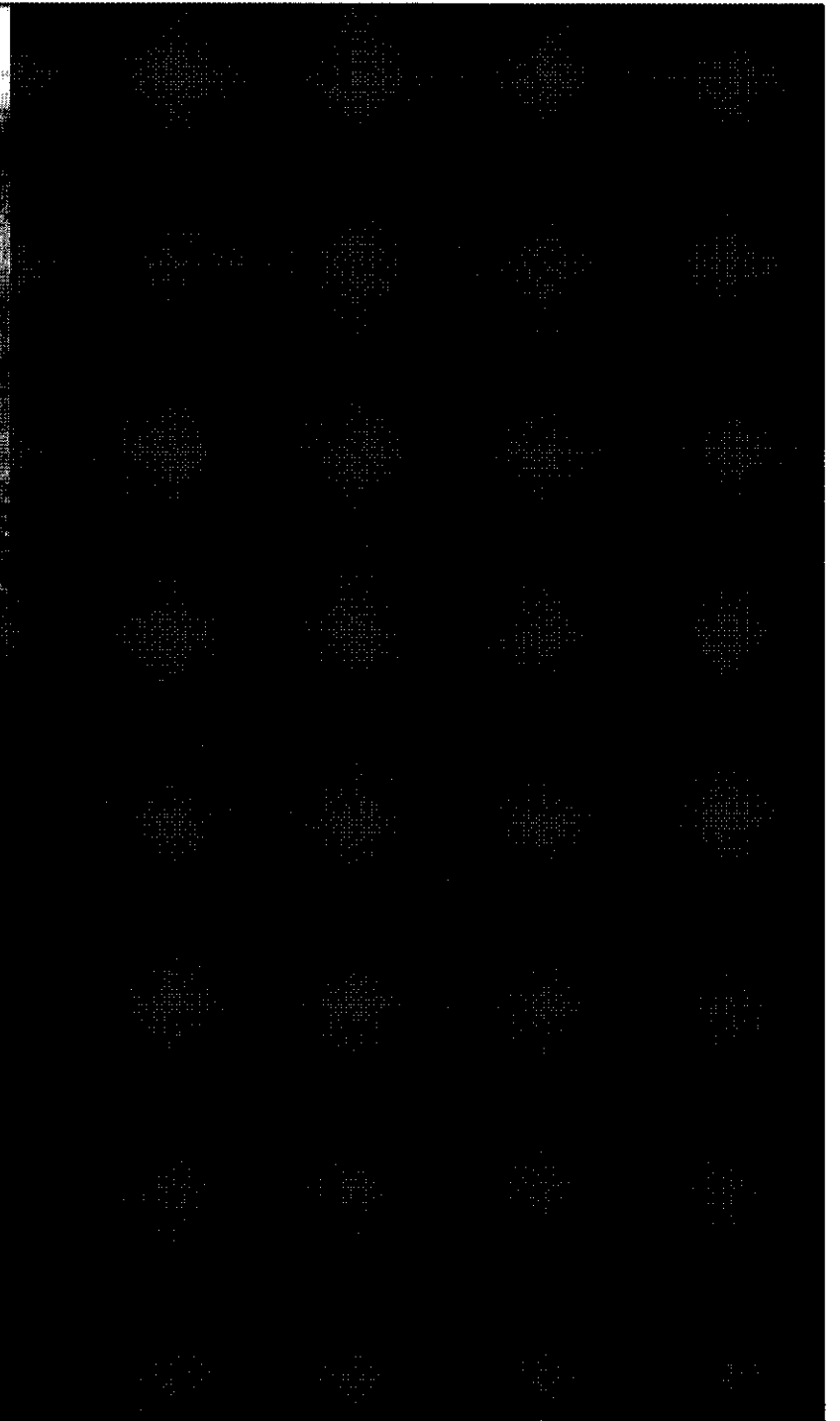


This document is a high level look on how Easton could capitalize on our strongest value proposition and attribute – agriculture.



Why do people come to Easton?

- The outdoors (hiking, fly fishing and biking)
- Buy food and connect with the farmers – as our Garden Club deemed “Easton is a farmers’ market”
- A beautiful ‘Sunday’ drive in the country





Why Agriculture as a value proposition?

1. We own it!
2. We don't have to create it – it comes naturally
3. It is flexible and evolves over time
4. Stewardship of the land and water



Plan to Ponder

EASTON'S ACTION



- Press writes about our agrarian and support of nature. Preserving a simpler and safe way of life. – attracting those leaving cities.
- People are drawn to this type of look and feel. Captures the messaging of a small New England town – think Norman Rockwell
- Creates Agri-tourism and agri-business
- Supports community and youth involvement within Easton and beyond. A more invested town is a happier and wealthier town. In addition, events bring people to Easton. Example, agri – tourism in Hudson Valley..

