

Agricultural Commission Exploratory Meeting Talking Points

(Presented by Ruth Geoffroy, Middleborough Town Planner)

Why are we here?

- I was asked as Town Planner to facilitate tonight's meeting.
- Individuals have asked whether establishing a Town Agricultural Commission will be useful and effective.
- Representatives from Dartmouth and Westport have been invited to give us insight into their experiences.
- Areas where Agricultural Commissions could be helpful:
 - Agricultural business development,
 - Networking with farmers, town boards, and service providers,
 - Advocacy for farmers with respect to complaints, problems and regulatory issues,
 - Providing access to technical, financial and business assistance,
 - Farmland protection,
 - Planning and advocacy on zoning and regulatory changes that help farmers.
- Middleborough is see and feel the signs of growth pressure:
 - MBTA
 - Suburban wave of development from the north
 - State of cranberry industry
 - Financial incentives for farmers to sell and retire
 - Cranberry growers are being forced to sell portions of uplands – bringing residential development very close to agricultural businesses.
 - Conflicts will become more prevalent between farmers and suburban land users
 - Land prices are making farmland protection very difficult
 - Individuals who want to farm are unable to find or afford land to farm
- Middleborough Residents want “rural lifestyle,” not just rural character
- If the town is to stay agriculturally oriented, it won't be by chance but by design and effort
- Keeping farms and farmers economically viable is the key
- Enabling new farmers to start up or relocate here will be important
- So, we are here to find out about possible benefits of establishing an agricultural commission and then for you, farmers and town residents, to decide if this is something that you would like to pursue
- We know there are many people who are farming advocates that would be willing to help you in this effort.