

Planning Board Meeting Talking Points

Proposed (TOWN) Agricultural Commission

Introductions (Agricultural Commission Steering Committee)

- Name & Affiliation/Agricultural Interest

Background

1. Residents in _____ have questioned whether establishment of an agricultural commission would be useful to the community.
 - Town of Dartmouth has had an Agricultural Commission since mid 1980's.
 - The Town of Westport recently established their commission in 2001.
 - There are movements to organize Agricultural Commissions in other southeastern Massachusetts communities and on the Cape.

What Agricultural Commissions do

Agricultural Commissions assist farmers, farm businesses and the community in the following ways:

1. Provides a voice for the agricultural community and improves the visibility of farming in the Town of _____.
2. Inventories and identifies (by mapping) agricultural properties in Town (Perm. Protected, Chapter 61 properties and other land in farming, forest and open space available for farming).
3. Completes Agricultural Needs Assessment. – Results are used to direct the activities of the Commission.
4. Connects farmers to agricultural business development assistance– Connecting farmers to where they can get business assistance (business planning, access to capital, business organization advice, access to loans, farm planning and natural resource conservation technical assistance, grants and government and non-profit programs).
5. Networks farmers to educational opportunities, available farmland, bulk purchasing opportunities, estate planning...
6. Serves as an advocate, negotiator and/or mediator w/ respect to farming issues/complaints, problems and regulatory processes.
7. Provides access to technical assistance such as natural resource conservation, environmental protection, business planning, production management, alternatives to production methods...
8. Advocates healthy agricultural businesses, thus farmland protection.

9. Further assists in Farmland Protection efforts by accessing state and federal funding for that purpose. (Ex; APR and FPP)
10. Develops communications with Town Boards (Planning, Health, Con Comm...) Provide coverage and beneficial input at meetings of Town Boards where there may be an agricultural issue.
11. Advocate for zoning & regulatory changes that benefit existing and future farming enterprises.

What we heard on August 19th (100 people gathered)

1. ***If Town is to retain agricultural land and agricultural businesses, it won't be by chance but by design and effort.*** This Agricultural Commission is the beginning of both the design and effort needed.
2. Residents of _____ want to retain an agricultural lifestyle not just a "rural character". Residents want a choice and an opportunity to pursue and retain farming business and farming lifestyles in the town they now live in.

What We Hope to Accomplish

Preserve, Revitalize and Sustain

The Town of _____ Agricultural Industry and It's Lands

- Encourage the Pursuit of Agriculture
- Promote Agricultural-based Economic Opportunities
- Protect Farmland

Questions/Discussion