

Town of East Windsor

Conservation Commission

Special Meeting

Tuesday, November 5, 2019

Location:

Park Hill Community Hall, 1A Park Hill, Broad Brook, CT.

Agenda

I. CALL TO ORDER – 6:30 PM

II. ESTABLISHMENT OF QUORUM

1. Attended by Albert Grant, Frances Neill, Donna Grant

III. ADDED AGENDA ITEMS

IV. APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

None available

V. NEW BUSINESS

1. Election of Officers

i. Donna Grant moved and Frances Neill 2nd to nominate Albert Grant as Chairman. Motion passed unanimously

ii. Donna Grant moved and Albert Grant 2nd to nominate Frances Neill as Secretary. Motion passed unanimously

2. Review of Proposed 2020 Conservation Commission Meeting dates – fourth Thursday monthly

i. Frances Neill moved and Donna Grant 2nd to approve the proposed Conservation Commission Meeting dates. Motion passed unanimously noting that November and December will need to be rescheduled as they fall on Thanksgiving and Christmas Eve.

3. Review of Conservation Commission Bylaws – Minor Revisions

i. Frances Neill moved and Donna Grant 2nd to approve the proposed changes to the Bylaws. Motion passed unanimously.

4. PA 490 Status for Open Space

- i. We again discussed how other towns have defined open space. Options include: at least 5 acres, Double the minimum lot size. Albert will talk to the town assessor to discuss ideas for our town definition.

5. State application process for Purchase of Development Rights Program

- i. Albert received from the CT Department of Agriculture a presentation defining the process - see attached Exhibit A. We are pursuing a possible interested party for preservation of development rights.

VI. OLD BUSINESS

1. POCD Action Plan

- i. We will inquire about getting the town planner to come to a meeting in the near future to discuss possible actions we should focus on in the POCD.

VII. MISCELLANEOUS

1. General Discussion

- i. On October 15, 2019 Albert Grant went before the East Windsor CIP Committee. His presentation requested that they consider replenishing the Town's Open Space Fund. His request was added to the list for consideration of awards to be made in June 2020. Albert's letter is attached as exhibit B.
- ii. Albert Grant submitted a synopsis of 2019 Conservation Commission year to be included in the Town's annual report.

VIII. REPORTS OF STAFF

IX. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

1. No public participation

X. ADJOURNMENT

1. Meeting adjourned at 6:50 PM.

Connecticut Farmland Preservation Program

THE PROCESS



Application accepted → Farm Configuration negotiated → Initial Title

Appraisal → Offer Agreement presented → Offer Agreement signed

State Property Review Board review/approval

A-2 boundary survey → USDA review (if applicable) → Final Title

DEVELOPMENT RIGHTS PURCHASED → STEWARDSHIP

Wisneske Farm, Norwich (joint project with CT Farmland Trust)



STATE OF CONNECTICUT
DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
Farmland Preservation Program



FARMLAND PRESERVATION APPLICATION

NAME(S): _____

ADDRESS: _____
(Street/Town/State/ZIP)

TELEPHONE: _____ FAX: _____ E-MAIL: _____

PROPERTY LOCATION (street/town): _____

DEED REFERENCE: Volume _____ Page _____ ZONING OF PROPERTY: _____

TAX MAP REFERENCE: Map _____ Lot _____ Block _____

I. PROBABILITY OF NON-AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT (please check all that apply):

1. Probability of land continuing in active agricultural production ____ High ____ Medium ____ Low
2. Active transfer negotiations or estate planning
3. Farm listed with Real Estate Agent
4. Other Situation (explain below)

Briefly explain why you are applying to the Farmland Preservation Program: _____

II. CURRENT PRODUCTIVITY FROM OFFERED LAND:

1. Total Acres Owned _____ Total Acres Offered _____ Cropland Acres Offered _____
Woodland Acres Offered _____
2. Current production of land offered (list each crop and crop acreage): _____

3. Gross annual receipts from unit production: _____
4. If not farmed by owner, please indicate who leases the Farmland, the number of acres leased and the annual rent paid: _____

450 Columbus Blvd., Suite 703, Hartford, CT 06103-1841
Phone: 860-713-2511 www.ctgrown.gov
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III. REQUIRED DOCUMENTS (Without these documents, your application cannot be considered):

1. A detailed soils report specifically noting prime and statewide important farmland soils, prepared by the Natural Resources Conservation Service. (This may be obtained free of charge from your county Ag Service Center, see below.)
2. A map/sketch identifying the land owned by the applicant and covered by this application. (A copy of the tax map of your property is available from your local Tax Assessor's Office.)
3. A copy of the current deed(s) of the subject property. (Available at your local Town Clerk's Office.)
4. A copy of the tax card(s) for the subject property. (Available from your local Tax Assessor's Office)

It is necessary for all owners of land submitted to give their approval and consent to this application.

Signed _____ Date _____

Date _____

Date _____

If you have questions, please phone Farmland Preservation at (860) 713-2511.

**U.S.D.A. Natural Resources Conservation Service
Offices and Centers**

Hartford and Tolland Counties

Windsor Service Center
100 Northfield Drive, 4th Floor
Windsor, CT 06095

(860) 688-7725

New London County

Norwich Service Center
Yantic River Plaza
238 West Town Street
Norwich, CT 06360

(860) 887-3604

Litchfield and Fairfield Counties

Torrington Service Center
1185 New Litchfield Street
Torrington, CT 06790

(860) 626-8258

Windham County

Danielson Service Center
71 Westcott Road
Danielson, CT 06239

(860) 774-0557

New Haven and Middlesex Counties

Hamden Service Center
51 Mill Pond Road
Hamden, CT 06514

(203) 287-8038

State Conservationist Office

344 Merrow Road, Suite A
Tolland, CT 06084-4011

(860) 871-4011

PROGRAM OBJECTIVE:

The main objective of the Farmland Preservation Program is to secure a land resource base for farming and food production. Qualifying farms consist primarily of prime and important farmland soils but may include adjacent pastures, wooded land and other open areas. In accordance with state regulation, farms must score a minimum of 65 to be considered by the Commissioner of Agriculture. To score at or above the required minimum, farms must generally be in active food and/or fiber production, contain a high percentage of prime and important farmland soils, be at least 30 acres in size and be located in or near agricultural communities.

HOW THE CONNECTICUT FARMLAND PRESERVATION PROGRAM WORKS:

1. Owners of farmland apply to the Department of Agriculture voluntarily.
2. A notice of application is filed with the town clerk of the municipality where the farm is located.
3. The application is evaluated according to objective state regulatory criteria. If the farm meets the minimum score set forth in the criteria, the Commissioner of Agriculture may work with the application.
4. Configuration of the farm application and specific variables of the development rights restriction are negotiated and agreed to by the landowner and Commissioner.
5. Based on the negotiated configuration and restriction language, the farm is appraised to determine its unrestricted market value and its market agricultural value. The difference between the two indicates the full value of development rights. Review appraisals are completed by the agency.
6. The appraisals are reviewed with the landowner and the Commissioner's offer/agreement letter is presented to the landowner. The Commissioner may negotiate anywhere from a gift of the appraised value of development rights to the full appraised value of those rights.
7. The land owner signs or rejects the Commissioner's offer.
8. If the agreement letter is signed by the landowner, a detailed report is submitted to the State Properties Review Board (SPRB). The SPRB approves or denies the proposed acquisition.
9. If approved by the SPRB, funds for the purchase of development rights, including funding for an A-2 boundary survey, title search and title insurance, are requested from the State Bond Commission, chaired by the Governor, or Community Investment Act program.
10. Upon the Funding approval, the state obtains an A-2 boundary survey and title search of the property. After completion, the conveyance of development rights deed is executed and a check for the development rights acquisition is processed. Once the Attorney General approves all the necessary documents, a closing is held and conveyance documents and survey maps are recorded on the local land records.

QUALIFYING APPLICATIONS:

Applications to the Connecticut Farmland Preservation Program are submitted voluntarily by property owners and may be considered by the Commissioner of Agriculture following an evaluation based on objective scoring criteria (Conn. Agencies Regs. § 22-26gg-1 ct seq.). The criteria utilized to score applications include:

- 1) Acres of cropland
 - 2) Crop yields per acre
 - 3) Quantity of land classified as having prime and important farmland soils
 - 4) Percentage of cropland that contains prime and important farmland soils
 - 5) Methods of marketing commodities produced on the farm
 - 6) Amount of other active farmland located in proximity to the farm
 - 7) Agricultural support services available in proximity to the farm
 - 8) Protection of the farm must be consistent with the State Conservation and Development Policies Plan for the State Of Connecticut
 - 9) Intensive development near the farm and an excessive cost of development rights acquisition negatively affect the score, and
 - 10) For protection projects involving USDA Agricultural Land Easement funds, farms may not have more than 67% non-cropland and must have at least 50% prime or important soils.
-

CONNECTICUT FARMLAND PRESERVATION PROGRAM OVERVIEW:

One of Connecticut's greatest resources is farmland. Farmland is at the heart of one of Connecticut's most vital businesses, agriculture. Through the Farmland Preservation Program, the Department of Agriculture preserves farmland by acquiring development rights to active agricultural properties. A permanent restriction on nonagricultural uses is placed on these farms. The farms remain in private ownership and continue to pay local property taxes.

The purchase of development rights program is voluntary on the part of the applicant. Applications are evaluated according to state regulation criteria. Successful applicants will own active farms that contain a high percentage of prime farmland soils and are in established farm communities. Early program studies estimated a development rights program in Connecticut would average 40% acquisition of lands classified by USDA-NRCS as prime and important farmland soils. The program's efforts through its negotiations and scoring criterion recognize the benefits of clustering farms in active farm communities. It has allowed the Commissioner to work with the best of the best applications and has enabled the program to average 65% prime and important farmland soils on its preserved farms.

Of the 42,000 acres preserved on the 325 farms in the program, approximately 30,000 acres are classified as prime and important farmland soils.

The goals and reasons for Farmland Preservation remain unchanged. A goal of preserving 130,000 acres, with 85,000 acres of cropland continues to be in effect for the Department of Agriculture. This land base will enable Connecticut to produce at least 50% of its fluid milk needs and 70% of its in-season fresh fruits and vegetables. This in-state production will ensure some degree of local availability of fresh farm products. It will also help ensure related jobs and remain an important part of the State's economy.

The main objective of the farmland preservation program is to secure a food and fiber producing land resource base, consisting primarily of prime and important farmland soils, for the future of agriculture in Connecticut. We try to accomplish this by preserving active farms that are clustered with other farms, therefore stabilizing a viable farming region.

Farmers continue to strongly support the program and think of it as a permanent program that will be there to give them a realistic alternative to selling their farm for residential development.

THE PROGRAM ASSISTS THE PUBLIC AND AGRICULTURAL COMMUNITIES ACROSS THE STATE BY:

- Preserving the best and most productive agricultural land.
- Providing an opportunity for farmers to purchase land at affordable prices.
- Helping farm owners overcome estate-planning problems which often result in farmland loss.
- Providing working capital to enable farm operations to become more financially stable and productive.
- Addressing other personal ownership problems, such as health and age, which contribute to the likelihood of the land being converted to non-agricultural uses.
- Providing a range of community amenities including its curious blend of serenity and industry.

Exhibit B

Exhibit B

Capital Improvement Committee

Oct. 15, 2019

On behalf of the EW Conservation Commission I would like to request that a portion of the Capital Improvement budget include funds to replenish the Town's Open Space Fund.

The Town recently spent \$16,000 for 16 acres of Scantic River frontage and \$235,000 for 25% of the cost of a CT Dept. of Ag. agricultural easement on 115 acres at #233 Rye St. We request that \$250,000 be used to bring the fund back, approximately, to its previous level.

The purchase of easements with the Open Space Fund is a useful tool to direct development in Town in order to keep key agricultural and recreational resources available. Securing a few larger farm parcels in an area contributes to the agricultural viability of surrounding smaller parcels. The Town's \$235,000, 25% of the \$940,000 development value combined with the \$700,000 sale price of the property resulted in the Town's keeping a \$1,640,000 asset in agriculture for approximately 14% of the cost. Say nothing about the future cost of Town services if the property were to be developed into homes.

The Open Space Fund will be necessary to take advantage of the next preservation opportunity that may arise.

Thank you,

Albert Grant, Chairman of the EW Conservation Commission