

EAST LYME BOARD OF SELECTMEN
MARCH 3, 2010
PUBLIC HEARING RE: ORDINANCE ESTABLISHING AN AGRICULTURAL
COMMISSION
MINUTES

PRESENT: Paul Formica, Mark Nickerson, John Birmingham, Rob Wilson, Rose Ann Hardy.

ALSO PRESENT: Town Attorney Ed O'Connell.

Mr. Formica called the meeting to order at 7:11 p.m. and led the Pledge.

Attorney O'Connell reviewed the proposed ordinance noting that this was the end result of 2-3 meetings where the Board of Selectmen had considered format and content.

Joe Mingo of 397 Boston Post Road said that farming is the only vocation that can be practiced anywhere in town, where other businesses cannot. He read Attachment A into the record.

LuAnne Lange of 160 Pennsylvania Avenue read Attachment B into the record.

Fred Grimsey of Waterford and President of Save the River, Save the Hills said that his Board believes strongly in the freedom to farm, but not the freedom to pollute. He stressed that the Board of Selectmen should pay attention to the best management practices regarding farming. He said he has been told that farms are exempt from inland wetland regulations and did not know if this was true.

Wayne Budney from the New London County Farm Bureau said he was surprised that it has taken over two years and there is still no decision. He said an agriculture commission contributes to the town regulatory commissions.

Ron Rando of 194 Boston Post Road said this was an expansion of government and that the State takes care of the farmers and we do not need this commission.

John Drabik of 18 Drabik Road said he has been involved with farming for 20-30 years and if he thought this commission would be a good idea, he would be involved. He said you already have the Department of Agriculture on a federal level, the CT Department of Agriculture on a state level and they both defend the right to farm. He said that East Lyme is user friendly and that you do not need a commission to solve a problem that does not exist.

Marvin Schutt of 29 N. Edgewood said he was testifying in favor of an Agricultural Commission even though he sensed that the members of the Board of Selectmen were not enthusiastic about the idea. He read Attachment C into the record.

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William Sawicky of 424 Drozdyk Drive, Groton said he has a vested interest in farmland and he is a taxpayer of the town. He recommended that the Selectmen put off the idea of a commission and form a committee to see how that works. He read Attachment D into the record.

Nancy Kalal of 80 Grassy Hill Road said that farmers have come forward asking for an ag commission and there is no conflict of interest because no one is on a commission. She said that page 59 of the town's POCD recommends the formation of an Agricultural Commission. She stressed that this is a commission to preserve a way of life and is strictly advisory not regulatory.

Maureen Bell of 18 Upper Pattagansett Road asked how an agricultural commission would be a detriment to the Town. She said nothing has been said about it and she has only heard benefits and therefore supports the ordinance.

Cheryl Lozanov of 9 W. Society Road told of her agricultural / horticulture degree and said as long as best management practices are used she is in favor of supporting the commission.

Bill Wernau of 13 Jean Drive said he is the volunteer coordinator for Heifer International which promotes urban farming and said that locally grown food is really healthy and we need to encourage the growing of it.

Alicia Geer of 86 Grassy Hill Road said there were farmers here, long before there was industry. She said farmers are being pushed away as being less and less important.

Joan Nichols works in government relations for the CT Farm Bureau said that an agricultural commission can only do good things for the Town of East Lyme and that there is nothing to fear. She agreed that there were only 9-11 commissions in CT, but more in Massachusetts. She asked the Selectmen to support this ordinance.

Mr. Birmingham said that most towns have their Conservation Commission perform the work that an agricultural commission might do.

LuAnne Lange said that the Conservation Commission supported this ordinance because they do not have the time to handle this subject. She inquired what they are so busy doing?

Mr. Sawicky said that there appears to be some dialogue needed and said with a commission, there will be no dialogue. He stressed the need for a committee instead.

Mark Christensen of 66 Grassy Hill Road said he was speaking in favor of this commission and he wanted to correct the inaccuracies from the Board of Selectmen meeting of February 3rd. He read Attachment E into the record.

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John Drabik said if someone owns agricultural land, they have the right to sell it if they want.

Mr. Christensen said he would stand behind the farmer's right to sell.

MOTION (1)

Mr. Wilson moved to close the Public Hearing at 8:57 p.m.

Seconded by Mr. Nickerson. Motion passed 5-0.

Respectfully submitted,

Darlene C. Stevens, Recording Secretary