

ORDINANCE ESTABLISHING AN AGRICULTURE COMMISSION

It is hereby ORDAINED by the Town Meeting of the Town of Sterling:

I. Establishment of Agriculture Commission

The Town of Sterling hereby establishes an Agriculture Commission, which shall serve as an advisory board to the Board of Selectmen and other Town agencies and officials, as set forth in this Ordinance.

II. Appointment, Membership, Terms, Meetings and Officers

A. Appointment and Membership.

The Agriculture Commission shall consist of five (5) regular members and three (3) alternate members, all of whom shall be appointed by the Board of Selectmen. Insofar as practical, members appointed shall be representative of all groups interested in the management, protection and regulation of agriculture, as defined by Connecticut General Statutes Section 1-1(q), particularly those directly involved in agriculture. Members shall serve without compensation. Any vacancy in office, arising for any reason, shall be filled by the Board of Selectmen for the balance of the term of the vacant position.

B. Terms of Office.

The initial terms of office of all regular members and alternate members shall begin on the same date, to be chosen by the Board of Selectmen. Three regular members and one alternate member shall be appointed for initial terms of three years. Two regular members and two alternate members shall be appointed for initial terms of two years. Thereafter, all terms of regular members and alternate members shall be three years.

C. Meetings and Officers.

The initial organizational meeting of the Agriculture Commission shall be held within one month after the official date of appointment of its members, which date shall be chosen by the Board of Selectmen. Thereafter, the Agriculture Commission shall hold an annual organizational meeting in January of each year. The Commission shall elect a chairman, vice chairman and secretary at each organizational meeting. Such officers shall serve until the conclusion of the organizational meeting following the meeting at which they were elected. The failure of any regular member to attend four (4) consecutive meetings of the Commission shall constitute cause for the Board of Selectmen to remove the member and fill the position thus vacated.

III. Powers and Duties of Agriculture Commission

The Agriculture Commission shall have the following powers and duties:

A. Information and Education.

1. To serve as a conduit of agricultural information among local farmers and Town boards, commissions, and officials, as well as non-profit agencies, civic organizations, and other governmental agencies and officials.
2. To serve as a source of information to the public about local agricultural enterprises; for example, by creating an informational website and maps of local farms.
3. To provide information to Town agencies and officials about agricultural laws and legal issues regarding farm machinery, buildings and operations.
4. To provide information and guidance to Town agencies and officials on agriculture-related issues, including but not limited to zoning, inland wetlands, and public works.

B. Agricultural Support.

1. To support young farmers and new farmers.
2. To support local, regional and state vocational agriculture education programs.

C. Conflict Resolution.

1. To review regulatory language and practices among Town agencies and, if appropriate, recommend changes to help assure a consistent definition and treatment of agriculture, farming and farms.
2. To act as a sounding board and offer guidance, as it deems appropriate, to Town agencies and officials concerning the impact of proposed Town ordinances, regulations and policies on farms.
3. To serve as a resource for information and non-binding advice for Town Agencies, officials, residents and taxpayers, concerning the resolution of agriculture-related conflicts.

D. Economic Opportunities.

1. To identify innovative opportunities for farming additional lands in Sterling.
2. To promote opportunities for residents and local businesses to support and value farming.
3. To serve as a conduit between non-profit agencies, funders, and local farmers.
4. To work to create a climate that supports the economic viability of farming as a career in Sterling.
5. To create a sustainable agriculture community in Sterling.

Adoption Date: February 24, 2010

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