

# AGRICULTURAL COMMISSION GUIDELINES

## Goals of an Agricultural Commission

1. Revitalize and sustain a community's agricultural businesses and its lands.
2. Encourage the pursuit of agriculture as a career choice and lifestyle.
3. Promote agricultural-based economic opportunities.

## Background

1. Helping the community understand the usefulness of an Agriculture Commission is the first step. It is important to hold a public meeting for local farmers and residents to discuss the Agricultural Commission concept. Forming a Steering Committee to help set up an Agriculture Commission is a good next step.
2. If a community is to retain and expand agricultural lands and businesses, it needs to focus on agriculture as a key economic development strategy. The Agriculture Commission can help develop this focus and facilitate the development of the strategy.
3. Residents of most rural communities want to retain a sustainable local economy, not just rural character. Residents need a choice and an opportunity to pursue and retain farming businesses as part of an overall economic development strategy.

## What will the Agricultural Commission do:

1. Provide a voice for farmers and visibility of farming as a business.
2. Inventory, identify and map agricultural assets and trends in the community.
3. Complete an Agricultural Needs Assessment which will be used to set priorities and direct activities of the Agricultural Commission.
4. Connect farmers to assistance which may consist of the following: technology and research, technical assistance, financial assistance, business planning and assistance, grants, loans, and estate planning.
5. Network farmers and managers to available farmland, educational opportunities and agriculturally related information.
6. Serve as an advocate, mediator, and or negotiator with respect to farming issues.
7. Foster healthy agricultural business management.
8. Further farmland protection efforts by assisting farmers with access to state, federal and private funding.
9. Request full use of a town's zoning and taxation mechanisms such as the Farm and Open Space Tax Law to benefit existing and future farming businesses. Evaluate value of property for protection and publicize opportunity for its agricultural use.
10. Develop lines of communication with the Board of Selectmen, Conservation Commission, and Planning and Zoning Boards, and their staff. Provide expert input on agricultural issues brought before these boards.
11. Develop relationships with state and federal legislators.
12. Write and implement an economic development plan for the community focused on agriculture.

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