

Agricultural Commission Talking Points

Why establish an Agriculture Commission?

- A community Agriculture Commission is useful and can be effective at promoting the business and economic value of agriculture to a region.
- Areas where Agricultural Commissions could be helpful:
 - Agricultural business development,
 - Networking with farmers, town boards, and service providers,
 - Advocacy for farmers with respect to complaints, problems and regulatory issues,
 - Providing access to technical, financial and business assistance,
 - Farmland protection,
 - Planning and advocacy on zoning and regulatory changes that help farmers.
- Issues facing communities:
 - Transportation
 - Sprawl and development
 - Health of the agriculture industry
 - Financial incentives for farmers to sell and retire
 - Agricultural producers are being forced to sell portions of their lands – bringing residential development very close to agricultural businesses.
 - Conflicts will become more prevalent between farmers and suburban land users
 - Land prices are making farmland protection very difficult
 - Individuals who want to farm are unable to find or afford land to farm
- Do residents want “rural lifestyle,” and not just rural character?
- If the town is to stay agriculturally oriented, there will need to be a specific intent and effort to do so.
- Keeping farms and farmers economically viable is the key
- Enabling new farmers to start up or relocate here will be important
- A strong case for an Agriculture Commission needs to be presented to the public and then help them decide the best course for the Commission and how it can help.
- There are a number of community, civic, and nonprofit organizations that are interested in and working towards agriculture’s prosperity.

What Agricultural Commissions do

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

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.

What We Hope to Accomplish

Revitalize and sustain a community's agricultural industry and its lands by

- Encouraging the Pursuit of Agriculture as a business
- Promoting Agricultural-based Economic Opportunities
- Protecting Farmland
- Advocating for agriculture as a key economic development strategy for a region.

For Further Information please contact:



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