

AGRICULTURE COMMISSION

Special Meeting

Thursday, July 31, 2014

Town Office Annex

MINUTES -- NOT YET APPROVED

Attendance:

Members of the Board present: Scot Mackinnon, Chair, Peter Dean (by telephone), Marianne Halpin, Nancy Mackinnon, Jeff Savitsky, Jessica Stone, Linda Stuhlman

Approximately 14 East Haddam citizens attended the meeting. No record of names was kept of those attending.

Dylan Mackinnon video-recorded the meeting at the request of Scot Mackinnon. Linda Stuhlman audio-recorded the meeting. Copies of either tape not yet available.

DRAFT ONLY

Chairman Scot Mackinnon called the Special Meeting to order at 7 pm.

The agenda for the meeting was a discussion of the petition about the Center for Community Agriculture (CCA) and major concerns and complaints signed by 237 East Haddam citizens.

Scot read the petition aloud. He said that the project is being handled by the Selectmen's office. Members of the Selectmen's CCA team are the First Selectman Mark Walter, Facilities Manager Craig Mansfield, Economic Development Coordinator Peter Simmons, and Economic Development member Deb Mathiasen.

It was brought to the attention of the citizens attending that the Agricultural Commission is an advisory committee only and has no authority in planning the CCA or writing its business plan. The Commission was there to hear concerns and questions.

Scot Mackinnon stated that the intent of the CCA was to:

- Teach people of all ages how to grow organically and sustainably
- Create jobs
- Preserve the aesthetic and rural character of East Haddam
- Encourage agriculture in East Haddam
- Limit taxpayer responsibility for the project

Citizens at the meeting said their concerns were:

- Lack of communication from the Agricultural Commission

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Continued

Cost of the project and implications for taxes

Condition of the property (wood chip piles)

Mt. Parnassus neighbors not notified or asked opinion.

Want to see Engineers' Report and Environmental Study

Who is responsible for CCA?

Is there a back-up plan if CCA fails?

Insurance

Energy efficiency

18-acre set-aside for municipal use

Want to see Grant Application and acceptance.

What is the total amount of the grants and how will money be used?

Town voted on acquisition of open space.

What research has been done on the need for a commercial kitchen?

The CCA project needs a permanent committee of citizens.

If the building is not built will the town need to give the grant money back?

There will be a greater impact on the town and its roads.

Safety issues

What are the certifications needed to use the CCA?

On what market research does the project depend?

What wells will be dug? This looks like it will impact the neighborhood water supply.

Kevin Staehly presented a letter which will be attached to the approved minutes.

Many citizens had overlapping concerns.

Some citizens spoke favorably about the CCA as being both what we need and inspiring.

Citizens' concerns were mainly about the building and kitchen rather than the agricultural fields or gardens.

The general opinion of the citizens was the CCA building should be suspended. The Town is not ready to put up a building until a 5-year business plan is complete and approved.

Meeting adjourned at 10 pm

A clean-up session at the CCA site will be held on August 9 from 9 am until noon.

Should any person who attended this meeting have changes, additions, or corrections, please email them to me. mmhalpin@comcast.net. Thank you.

Respectfully submitted,

Marianne Halpin, Agricultural Commission Secretary