

**AGRICULTURE COMMISSION
APPROVED MINUTES**

Monday, January 6, 2014
Town Office Annex
7:00 P.M

1. **Call to Order:** Chairman Mackinnon, 7 pm
2. **Attendance:** Regular Members: Present: Scot Mackinnon, Jeff Savitsky, Nancy Ballek Mackinnon, Linda Stuhlman, Peter Dean, Marianne Halpin.
3. **Absent:** George Scrivener
4. **Guests:** EH First Selectman, Mark Walter; Craig Mansfield, EH Facilities Director; Jessica Stone, East Haddam Farmers' Cooperative and RiverCog.
5. **Approval of Minutes:** The minutes of the regular December meeting were approved without correction.
6. **Ongoing Projects**
 - A. **Community Agriculture Center:** The Ad Hoc Committee had requested that those working on the CCA share plans and progress at the meeting. Mr. Walter, Mr. Mansfield, and Miss Stone were able to attend. Mr. Thomas, Mr. Simmons, and Mr/Ventres were unable to come.

Mr. Dean said that he and the other members of the Ad Hoc Committee are meeting weekly to write the business plan for the CCA. The Ad Hoc Committee asked that Mr. Walters, Mr. Mansfield and Miss Stone give an update on what has been planned and finished so far.

Mr. Walter explained that the main focus of the Selectman's Office is our grant requests.

Four Acres of deer fencing has been put in

Architect bid went out

Working forward with dollars on hand

Seeking more grants

Learning how expensive the project is

\$20,000 applied to property clearing

A core group is working on the project in the Town Office

A \$25,000 donation to the CCA was received from Bob and Mary Martin and Ed Ritz.

Mr. Walter said that the business model had not been decided and that this made planning more difficult. On January 15 the Selectmen will discuss the pros and cons of non-profit, LLC, town entity.

Mr. Walter stated that the Selectman's Office seeks input from the Agricultural Commission and the Ad Hoc Committee.

Ms. Stuhlman reported that the Ad Hoc Committee has been meeting weekly to develop a business plan for the CCA. The group went to Franklin County, MA to have a guided tour of the organization and of the commercial kitchen. Ms. Stuhlman described 8 other kitchens, community farms, or workshops the Ad Hoc visited to learn more about similar projects to the EHCCA.

Ms. Stuhlman also shared some of the reported pitfalls and problems encountered with rental and leasing processing kitchens.

The Ad Hoc Committee stressed the need for more market research, focus groups, and surveys to determine the viability of a commercial processing kitchen in East Haddam.

Ms. Stuhlman asked Ms. Stone and Mr. Mackinnon who some of the people were who had, in the past, expressed an interest in leasing planting space or a processing kitchen here. Mr. Walter asked the same question. No names were available.

Mr. Walter directed the Ad Hoc Committee to pursue making a list of survey questions and schedule focus group sessions.

Ms. Stuhlman asked Mr. Savitsky if he would be willing to ask EH Farmers' Market vendors to participate in a survey. He said he'd be happy to do so.

Ms. Stuhlman passed around a description of Click, <http://clickwillimantic.com/>, a commercially licensed cooperative kitchen, in Windham. Click began in 2009.

Ms. Stuhlman asked that the CCA planners meet with

Joseph Bonelli, UCONN fundamentals of agribusiness management, financial and farm business succession planning for agricultural businesses in Connecticut, risk management, working with agricultural producers on a one-on-one basis dealing with financial planning.

Joan Nichols, specializes in planning and zoning regulations; inland wetlands regulations; Plans of Conservation and Development, Right to Farm law and local Right to Farm ordinances; and agricultural commissions, all tax programs related to agriculture including but not limited to: PA 490; state agricultural tax exemption programs; optional tax reduction programs adopted through municipal ordinance; and fuel taxes and road taxes.

Diane Wright Hirsch, MPH, RD, UCONN, Food Safety

Diane Hirsch is responsible for food safety education and addressing safe food handling from farm to table, including on-farm production, food processing, food service, retail and consumer education.

The Commission and the Selectman said they would be open to scheduling a meeting

The Ad Hoc Committee received a brochure from Mr. Walter entitled The Center for Community Agriculture. The contact person is listed as onebotanychick@gmail.com. Tel: 860-873-1930 (main) 860-316-8368 (cell). This is also the case on the East Haddam website. The dates are incorrect as they refer to 2013. The Commission requested Ms. Stone to take down the incorrect information on both websites. Ms. Stone said the website subscription on the EHFarmers' Cooperative will run out soon. She said because of this she didn't believe it was necessary to change it. She said she would provide the Commission with the username and password if anyone wanted to make those changes.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:45.

Respectfully submitted,

Marianne Halpin, Secretary