

AgCom Minutes

October 12, 2016

Present:

Ed Ferreira

Jay Tripp

Karl Santos

Carole Mann

Shirley Robbins

Alternates:

Tom Barrett

Absent:

Lee Tripp

Brian Perry

Geralynn Gaskell

Rob Russell

Mike Perry

Guests:

Ron Potter

Becky – Weatherlow Farm

Maury May – Economic Development Task Force

Jim Harnett – Planning Board

Mr. Barboza – Press

7:30 Meeting CTO

Pledge of Allegiance

BOH: Nothing

Animal Control: Nothing

Planning Board: Jim spoke to AgCom regarding changes to be made to the Ag Zoning By-Law.

See attachéments to minutes. Wait to vote on this until next months meeting.

Maury May: Spoke to AgCom about upcoming Winter Farmers' Market. 5 Saturdays 11/19 to 12/17, 9-1 pm in Town Hall Annex basement. Should be enough room for 16 stalls.

Milky Way Farm: Social Media post of a skinny horse being mistreated at Milky Way Farm caused a major problem. The animal in question was not a horse but an older mule owned by the farm. The MSPCA was called and the mule was in excellent health. See attached letter from Milky Way Farm.

Tenant Farming Regulations: Tenant Farming Task Force had a meeting, Lee attended meeting. Should have information on this meeting at our next AgCom meeting in November. Permitting, shelter, fencing,

Define tenant farming etc. Repeated calls to State Vet Dr. Connor have not been returned. Ed to call Rep. Paul Schmit to see if he can help.

Animal Inspector: Alex McDonald and David Rose were recommended by AgCom for Animal Inspector. See Letter attached.

Old Business: Approve minutes from September 21, 2016 with correction regarding 61A property on Blossom Road, Ed Ferreira did sign the paperwork for release. Motion to approve Shirley, second Carole

Minutes from May and August 2016 still need approval.

Next Meeting November 9, 2016, 7:30pm

Meeting adjourned 8:45pm Motion by Shirley, second by Jay.

# Agricultural Zoning By-Law

## Existing Regulations as Approved at ATM 2016

### Section 1.1 Definitions

Created Definitions for Agriculture

- References M.G.L. Chapter 61A, Sections 1 & 2
- Chapter 40a Section 3
- Westport Right to Farm By-law LIV
- Agri-entertainment
- Agri- tourism
- Commercial activities

This definition is more permissive than those listed in MGL Chapter 40A, Section 3 and Chapter 128, Section 1A.

No requirement for Minimum Lot Size

No requirement for primary Agricultural Use. (As long as applicant can demonstrate an agricultural experience the entertainment use would be permitted)

Because Agriculture is permitted in all districts as a matter of right the new definitions permit Agri-entertainment, tourism and commercial activities as the primary or accessory use.

### Section 4.01B Accessory Uses

Permits the same accessory uses in residential district as above. This is repetitive because the definition above permits it as a primary or an accessory use.

### Use Table

Did not include STOD District

## Proposed Changes 2017

### Section 1.1 Definitions

Amends Definitions to be consistent with M.G.L's. Defines

- Agriculture & Agriculatural
- Agri-entertainment
- Agri-tourism
- Agri-commercial
- Farm Enterprise

These definitions would be consistent with 330 CMR 22.00 Agriculture Preservation Restriction Program and MGL Chapter 40A, Section 3 and Chapter 128, Section 1A.

### Section 4.01B Accessory Uses

6. Agri-entertainment, Agri-commercial and Agri-tourism shall be permitted as accessory uses provided the primary use of the land is Agriculture, the parcel has a minimum of five (5) acres and the sales meet the 25% and 50% rules as defined in M.G.L. Chapter 40A, Section 3.

### Chapter 40A, Section 3 -25% & 50 % rule

"...during the months of June, July, August and September of each year or during the harvest season of the primary crop raised on land of the owner or lessee, 25 per cent of such products for sale, based on either gross sales dollars or volume, have been produced by the owner or lessee of the land on which the facility is located, or at least 25 per cent of such products for sale, based on either gross annual sales or annual volume, have been produced by the owner or lessee of the land on which the facility is located and at least an additional 50 per cent of such products for sale, based upon either gross annual sales or annual volume, have been produced in Massachusetts on land other than that on which the facility is located..."

### Use Table

Includes STOD District

*Westport*  
*Winter Farmers' Market*  
*November & December 2016*



*The Town of Westport's Economic Development Task Force is sponsoring a Winter Farmers' Market later this year.*

- **When – November & December 2016.** The Winter Farmers' Market will take place on five Saturday mornings from 9:00 am to 1:00 pm – November 19 & 26, 2016 and December 3, 10, & 17, 2016.
- **Where – Westport Town Annex.** We have booked the indoor basketball court in the basement of the Annex at 856 Main Road, Central Village.
- **Annex – great location.** The Annex is located in the central business district of Westport, near banks, a large market, a busy gas station, and many other businesses. It is Town-owned, has plenty of parking, and offers easy vendor logistics.

***Contacts:***

- ***Maury May – Vice-Chair, EDTF - (508) 636-9934 – [maurymay@hotmail.com](mailto:maurymay@hotmail.com)***
- ***Steve Connors – Member, EDTF – (401) 447-5650 – [steveconnors@charter.net](mailto:steveconnors@charter.net)***

October 11, 2016

To Whom it May Concern:

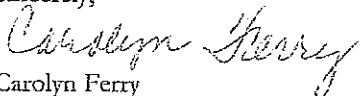
It was recently brought to our attention that a member of the Agricultural Commission, Ms. Gerri Gaskell, falsely accused our farm, Milky Way Farm, of mistreating our forty-year-old donkey Mabel on social media. As an initial matter, the statements made on social media were wholly incorrect. Above a picture of our beloved Mabel was a comment alleging that she was a mistreated horse being neglected on our farm. To be clear Mabel is a forty year old donkey and is in excellent health. That much was confirmed by the MSPCA who were apparently called by someone that saw the post on social media.

Needless to say these false accusations of animal cruelty are detrimental and disruptive to our farm business as we were bombarded with calls, social media messages and posts. We also had ill-informed members of the public angrily come to our farm to "investigate." Aside from the obvious negative impact this had on our day-to-day operations, it also negatively damaged our farm's reputation in incalculable ways as we struggle to accurately inform the public in the wake of the post. Most regrettably, this post has caused our family severe distress and shock after having passionately run this farm for decades to the highest husbandry standards, of which we are proud.

The purpose of the Westport Agricultural Commission is to protect farms, such as ours, and preserve our ability to operate. This unwarranted and unfounded attack on our reputation runs counter to that noble goal. While we would like to believe that Ms. Gaskell acted with the best of intentions, she nevertheless invited unwarranted attention to our farm and disturbed our animals, including poor Mabel, who's newfound fame on facebook was neither asked for nor appreciated. For that disturbance, we are requesting that Ms. Gaskell oblige our request for a public apology during the next Agricultural Commission meeting and publicly retract her statements on social media. We feel that this is the least she can do and would ask that she be relieved of her seat on the Agricultural Commission should she not.

Thank you again for all of your efforts and support in furthering the efforts of Westport's farming community and your service to our Town.

Sincerely,

  
Carolyn Ferry

Dear Select Board Members

10/1/16

Re: Letter of recommendation

At our last Westport AGCOM meeting on September 21, 2016 the board discussed and voted to approve this letter of recommendation for two individuals who we feel would be qualified candidates for the position of Westport Municipal Animal Inspector. We would like to recommend the following two people to be considered as strong candidates for this position. These candidates names are:

David Rose from Swansea Massachusetts. David Rose is currently an alpaca farmer and has been involved in the agricultural arena for many years. He was also Director of Farm Service Agencies for many years in Bristol County.

Alex McDonald from Taunton Massachusetts is a retired state animal inspector.

If you need any more information regarding these candidates and their qualifications, please feel free to contact the Westport Agricultural Commission. Thank you for keeping us in the loop as this position is being filled. Please let us know if there is anything else that we can do to help find candidates appropriate to fill this position of Westport Municipal Animal Inspector.

Thank you,

AGCOM

cc: Westport Board of Health

Tim King Town Administrator