

**North Branford Agriculture Commission Meeting
Minutes of Monday, February 7, 2011
North Branford Town Hall Council Chambers
7:00 pm.**

1. Call to Order and Roll Call:

Call to Order: Cliff Potter called the meeting to order to 7:03 p.m.

Members Present: Michael Doody, Joe DeFrancesco, Gerald Adinolfi, Ryan Van Wilgen, Cliff Potter

Alternate Members: Dudley Harrison, Harry Juniver

Guests: Carol Zebb, Town Planner

2. Approval of Previous Month's Minutes

Alternate Member Juniver made a motion to approve the minutes of January 4, 2011 seconded by Alternate Member Harrison and passed unanimously.

3. Unfinished Business: None

4. New Business

a. Continue work, tax adjustments

Town Planner Zebb gave an overview of a report that was prepared in cooperation with the Town Planner's and Town Assessor's offices which showed the evaluation and impact analysis on a town exemption program for farm buildings. A list of towns was given that had taken the farm exemption. It was explained that there was a State Statute in 2003 for farm building exemptions and was revised in 2005 to include an exemption for buildings housing seasonal farming employees. Other State Statutes existed that a municipality could abate up to an additional \$100,000 of assessed value of farm machinery over the presently State allowed amount up to \$100,000 of assessed value of farm machinery. In addition, another State Statute also allowed a municipality to abate up to 50% for dairy, vegetable farms, nursery and seasonal workers' housing of an active farmer. Town Planner Zebb described the summary of estimated tax implications on different scenarios using the existing number of farm buildings. She also explained that the 2010 grand list is less than the 2009 grand list which may make a difference to the Town Council in considering a tax abatement program. The earliest that this could be implemented would be for the grand list of 2011 and payment being due by July 2012. Consensus of the Commission was this tax exemption program should proceed forward since this Commission represented the farmers and such a program would become part of the town's economic development strategy. The members stated when this is proposed to the Town, support would be needed from both farmers and homeowners to show their support for this exemption. The first step would be for this Commission to pass a resolution and forward it to the Town Manager for presentation to the Town Council. Members discussed what information should be in the report. It should be based on a realistic number of active farmers who would probably apply and qualify for this. The existing nine active farmers who presently filed for a farm machinery tax exemption should be used. That number resulted in approximately \$19,000 in farm building tax exemption revenue. The Commission also reviewed what informational attachments to include. Member Van Wilgen suggested obtaining Wallingford, Guilford and

Cheshire studies and passed ordinances. Town Planner Zebb indicated that she would redraft the report from the Commission eliminating the exemption for seasonal housing for farm workers and for any additional amount on farm equipment in the proposed ordinance and do other report changes as discussed. Member Van Wilgen made a motion to redraft the report as discussed and to forward this to the Town Council for their agenda the first meeting in March, seconded by Member Doody and passed unanimously.

b. Augur barn repairs

The deadline is May 21st to submit all the necessary paperwork. There is no update regarding the windows.

c. Greenhouse update

Member Van Wilgen stated Ian Gibson spoke to him regarding funding.

d. Tractor pulls update for 2011

The scheduled dates are July 23, Aug 6 and Oct. 22, 2011.

e. Ag. Committee signs (future)

Suggestion for the future would be a sign in front of the Town's Augur farm property.

f. Town entrance signs

Tabled any discussion to a future meeting.

g. Members items to be discussed

Town Planner Zebb stated next year's budget has been compiled with the same figures as last year. Alternate Member Juniver made a motion to approve the budget as presented, seconded by Member Gerald Adinolfi and passed unanimously.

Member Van Wilgen stated he has a draft letter to the DOT regarding Van Wilgen's sign and the initial design plans for Rt. 139. This construction is scheduled to take place during the busiest time of the year for Van Wilgen's.

h. Visitor comments - none

5. Executive session

- a. Personnel matter, in accordance with C.G.S. Section 118a (e)(1)
- b. Action to be taken if any

No discussion at this time concerning this matter.

6. Adjournment: 8:45 p.m.

Alternate Member Harrison moved, seconded by Member DeFrancesco to adjourn the meeting. The motion was carried unanimously.

Submitted by:

Janet S. Crean
Recording Secretary