The meeting may be viewed on YouTube:  [https://youtu.be/IrI5cTcWEPc](https://youtu.be/IrI5cTcWEPc)

The April 26, 2022, Special Meeting of the Agriculture Commission was convened by Chairman Christain Sorensen via WebEx at 8:01 p.m.

Present:  Christain Sorensen, Andrea Urbano, Krystina Hulland, Steve Munno, and Leland Torrence

Board of Selectmen/Liaison:  Paul Kuriakose

Staff:  Geraldine S. Shaw

MINUTES
The minutes of the March 8, 2022, meeting were approved (Sorensen – Urbano)

ANNUAL TOWN MEETING – Five-year lease extension

Mr. Sorensen said that the outcome of his conversation with First Selectman Heller, Town Counsel Gerald Weiner, and Board of Selectman Liaison Kuriakose is that the item of lease extension would not be considered at the Annual Town Meeting; that the Town would prefer to consider each request on a case- by-case basis, considering the planned use of the property; and the Town would work with the applicant farmer in applying for State/federal or other grants.

Ms. Hulland said that the State Dept. of Agriculture and the NRCS will not consider the Town as either an applicant or a co-applicant; recognize the farmer only; and the farmer - applicant must show that they have a minimum of 5-years control of the property.

She said that if farmers are going to be eligible for any grant funds, it is important that the Town find a new mechanism to approve a five-year lease and that the Town is not showing enough commitment, in the long-term, to the improvement of the properties being farmed. Ms. Hulland said that she has informed Ms. Heller of the problem. Unfortunately, she has not been able to schedule a meeting. She said that she was of the impression that the farm lease matter was scheduled for the Annual Town Meeting.

Ms. Urbano asked that it be recorded that she also expected the lease matter to be on the agenda and was very upset that the Board of Selectmen chose not to honor the Commission’s request.

The Commission agreed that its top priority is to find a way for the Town to extend the leases to five-years; the importance of the farmers being able to apply for grant funds to secure and improve the property; to be able to plant crops that extend over more than one growing season; and to protect the crops from marauding animals.

Mr. Kuriakose said that he would seek more information re the Board of Selectmen’s position.

FARM STAND ZONING REGULATION –update
The Town Plan & Zoning Commission will hold a public hearing on May 2nd at 6:30 p.m. re the Commission’s request to modify the Farm Stand Regulation. Commission members will be present to answer questions from the residents.
90’ BASEBALL DIAMOND – History – Current Issues
Ms. Shaw gave a brief history of the plans to install a 90’ baseball diamond on the Alegi Property (the Town property leased by the Hullands). The Beth-Wood Baseball League had two years to raise the funds to build the field. The memorandum of understanding expired without the funds raised. The Recreation Department and the Beth-Wood League continue to pursue methods to obtain the funds to build the field. The Commission agreed to be pro-active in locating the field elsewhere – such as on the former Country Club of Woodbridge property where there is more room for parking, and related activities.

OCTOBER MEETING-
Suggested for the October agenda:
1. Minutes of the April 26th meeting
2. Invite the First Selectman to the meeting for discussion of mechanism to grant lease extensions.
3. Status of Farm Stand Zoning Regulation
4. Consider holding a Farm Tour – Spring of 2023 (May/June)
   Type: Private Farms or the Selectmen tour the leased farm-lands
5. Taxing of Personal Property used for farming operation

ADJOURNMENT
On a non-debatable motion by Mr. Sorenson, seconded by Mr. Torrence, the meeting adjourned at 8:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Geraldine S. Shaw, Clerk