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Here's your chance to support East Lyme's **AGRICULTURAL COMMISSION**

Please come to the Board of Selectmen meeting.

Wednesday, January 20 at 7:30 p.m.

East Lyme Town Hall

(We'll have you home by 9 pm.)

*Come and voice your support for agriculture
during "public delegations."*



WHAT IS AN AGRICULTURAL COMMISSION (AGCOM)?

An agricultural commission (AgCom) is a body of town government created through a vote at a Town Meeting and appointed by the Board of Selectmen. East Lyme's AgCom will represent its farming community, helping to ensure that the various town boards understand the impact of their actions on its agricultural community. By establishing an AgCom through a Town Meeting vote, a town goes on record as supportive of retaining farming as a viable business in town.

WHAT WILL AN EAST LYME AGCOM DO?

Represent the East Lyme farming and oystermen community

Sponsor farmer's markets and town celebrations of agriculture

Preserve, revitalize, and sustain agricultural businesses and lands

Facilitate the resolution of farmer/neighbor conflicts

Protect farmlands, its businesses, and natural resources

Acquire grants from the State of CT Ag Viability program. Grants can provide technical assistance for development and enable us to:

Sponsor farmer's markets and town celebrations of agriculture

Create our own website

Agro-tourism in town linking farming to the business community

Promote the Farm-link program—providing land to young and future farmers

Complete the Right to Farm Ordinance...and much more.

About AgComs: Overview

What is an Agricultural Commission (AgCom)?

A town agricultural commission (AgCom) is a standing committee of town government, created through a vote of Town Meeting and appointed by the Board of Selectmen or governing body of the town. AgComs represent the farming community, encourage the pursuit of agriculture, promote agricultural economic development and protect farmlands and farm businesses, and preserve, revitalize and sustain agricultural businesses and land. In some communities they focus on farmland preservation efforts, while in others they review regulatory proposals developed by other town boards (planning board, board of health, conservation commission, etc), or provide marketing coordination to assist all farms in town. Others have played key roles in mediating farmer/neighbor disputes, or simply providing referrals for farmers needing better information. By working within town government through an AgCom, farmers enhance their credibility, and are viewed as part of the problem-solving team.

What does an AgCom do?

Serves as a local voice advocating for farmers, farm businesses and farm interests

Provides visibility for farming

Works with other town boards about issues facing the town that affect agriculture

Helps resolve farm related problems or conflicts

Protects farmland and natural resources

Who can start an AgCom?

Any local resident or group concerned about their communities' farming, farm businesses, growth, rural character, open space, etc. can start organizing support for an AgCom.

Why are town AgComs formed?

Many towns trying to balance growth and quality of life issues are creating AgComs. The intent of an AgCom is simple: protect agricultural lands, preserve rural character, provide a voice for farmers, and encourage agricultural based businesses.

Who can serve on an AgCom?

Anyone who is a resident of the town is eligible to sit on a town board or commission. However, the by-law created and passed by the town determines the number of members and composition of the commission. In towns with existing AgComs there are several types of members-voting, alternate, and advisory. Usually, the voting members are farmers. Each town should decide what type of membership and qualifications are appropriate for their community.

Does an AgCom cost the town money?

Towns provide support for all committees-each town should decide what is an appropriate budget for the AgCom. Existing AgCom

budgets range from \$0 to \$1,000 per year.

Are AgComs regulatory?

Unlike some other town committees, AgComs do not operate under any regulatory authority from the Commonwealth. While town conservation commissions implement the State Wetlands Protection Act and planning boards enforce the local zoning code, AgComs are created at Town Meeting to represent farming interests in the town-but they do not have any legal mandate or enforcement authority.

What are AgComs doing in Massachusetts?

Adopting local right-to-farm by-laws

Raising monies for farmland protection and economic development

Starting local farmer's markets

Providing mediation and conflict resolution on farm related disputes within town

Collaborating with other town boards on development proposals

Educating town residents about the value of agriculture in the community

Holding educational workshops on intergenerational transfer of property, Chapter 61 lands, farm viability, and Agricultural Preservation Restrictions

Obtaining technical assistance on nonpoint source pollution, conservation farm planning, manure management, environmental stewardship

A town agricultural commission (AgCom) is an appointed town standing committee whose members are primarily engaged in farming and are responsible for:

Representing the farming community

Encouraging the pursuit of agriculture

Promoting agricultural-based economic opportunities

Preserving, revitalizing, and sustaining the communities' agricultural businesses and lands

AgComs are:

Mapping farms and farmlands

Identifying farmers' and the community's needs, issues and concerns

Serving as an information clearinghouse and forum for farm-town relations

Facilitating the technical, educational, business and regulatory assistance needed to farm and to live near farms

Developing trust and a working relationship among farmers, residents and institutions

Advocating at state and federal levels for support of community-identified agricultural needs

Facilitating access to conflict resolution services for farmers and the community

Hosting community agricultural events

Recommending actions on land use programs that would help agriculture thrive, including Chapter 61, tax valuation, APR and other preservation programs and right-to-farm by-laws

Seeking out informational and educational resources relevant to farms and farm communities

Matching farmers with available land and helping the landowner and the farmer promote sustained use