

TOWN OF GRANBY
AGRICULTURAL COMMISSION
Special Meeting Minutes
May 1, 2025

MEMBERS PRESENT: Heather Lombardo, Sara Esthus, Ellen Whitlow, Rachel Antonucci, Shirley Murtha

Absent: Liam O'Leary, John O'Brien

Others Present: Jim Szipszky from the Conservation Commission

Chairperson Heather Lombardo called to order at 6:36 p.m.

DISCUSSION WITH CONSERVATION COMMISSION

Chairperson Lombardo asked Jim Szipszky of the Conservation Commission to share his ideas as to improvements to the Town-Owned-land leases. Mr. Szipszky stated that his ideas would be presented in two parts: the first are suggestions for the 2025 growing season. The second are thoughts about future leases.

Regarding the 2025 growing season, he recommended that the Town request details from the farmer regarding:

- The type of crops that will be planted.
- The types of applications (fertilizers, pesticides, fungicides, herbicides) and the anticipated timing of those applications.
- Results of annual soil testing

In addition, he recommended that the Town reinforce the expectations that Worker Protection Standards will be followed regarding the application of pesticides (ex. wash stations, porta potties for worker), and compliance with manufacturer's requirements for such applications. It was suggested that an annual meeting with the farmer be held to review the property boundaries, near-by home locations, and public access right of way.

After a few questions from Agricultural Commission members, Chairperson Lombardo allowed for **Public Comment**.

Celeste Johnson, Barndoor Hills Rd, stated that she walks the Barndoor Hills leased property regularly and is upset at the alleged damage done to the property regarding wetlands and leveling. She introduced **Kevin Solek**, a farmer from Southwick, who suggested that this particular property might best be farmed with grasses and hay, which would require less pesticide application.

Lee Shaw, Barndoor Hills Rd, requested that the Town require the farmer put up signs to inform abutters and the public who traverse the property of pesticide applications, in the same way that landscape companies do, and that the types of pesticides used be more restricted than they are currently. She also asked that there be consequences for lease violations.

Stephanie Harper, Barndoor Hills Rd, stated that she is an abutter to the farm property and has suffered damage to her crops from spray-pesticide drift. She feels that town leases should require that abutters be notified before and after applications and farmers must follow the product recommendations for application. Concerns were also raised regarding the contamination of water in the Salmon Brook.

Peggy Lareau, Reed Hill Rd, gave a history on the farm parcel and its acquisition by the Town. She believes that the original intent was to provide open space, a wildlife corridor, access for residents, as well as support of agriculture. She wonders why the lease was not terminated.

Holly Healy, West Granby Rd, stated that ordinary soil testing is not helpful in determining contamination. She believes that the farmer's "excuses" are not believable if he has the experience that he claims to have.

Discussion continued regarding suggestions for the future. These include:

- Assess what crops are "appropriate" for each parcel, and limit bidding to farmers who would be growing those crops.
- Establish an oversight body to assure that lease terms are being followed.
- Look into selling the development rights for some parcels.
- Consider placing some of these recommendations into the Plan of Conservation and Development.

Chair Lombardo agreed to attend the next meeting of the Conservation Commission on May 13. It is hoped that recommendations can be made to the Board of Selectman that will respect farmers Right to Farm while also appeasing resident's concerns about safety and stewardship.

NEXT MEETING

The next regular meeting will be June 11, 2025

ADJOURNMENT

- **ON A MOTION** by Sara Esthus, seconded by Ellen Whitlow, the meeting was adjourned at 8:30 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Lauren Stuck
Recording Secretary