



**TOWN OF FRANKLIN
AGRICULTURE AND CONSERVATION COMMISSION [AgCon]**

**FRANKLIN TOWN HALL
7 Meetinghouse Hill Rd.
Franklin, CT 06254**

REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
Thursday, March 18, 2020
7:30 p.m.

This meeting was held in virtual format with connections via live stream and video conferencing.

1. Call to Order: Chairperson Susan Allen called the meeting to order at 7:34 pm.

Members Present: Chairperson Susan Allen, Vice Chair Alan Holmberg. **Members Absent:** Gail Miller, Craig Staebner. **Alternate Member Present:** Roland Mihok **Alternate Members Absent:** Chester Rynaski

Roland Mihok was seated as a voting member.

2. Recognition of Visitors and Initial Inquiries: No visitors.

3. Approval of Minutes

- a. December 17, 2020:

MOTION #1 (03.18.21): made by Alan Holmberg SECONDED BY Roland Mihok that the Agriculture & Conservation Commission approve the Meeting Minutes of December 17, 2020 - as presented

VOICE VOTE: UNANIMOUS;

MOTION CARRIES

4. Call for Additional Agenda Item: NONE

5. Correspondence: NONE

6. Old Business:

- a. **Franklin Swamp WMA Presentation:** The American Woodcock has been spotted in the swamp area in and around barberry. The Woodcock has similar features that of a morning dove but the beak is noticeably different. This is inspiring in that the swamp area is supportive of wildlife.
 - b. **Conservation Easement Policy:** There has been discussion with the First Selectman about changing the current Conservation Easement Regulation/Policy. The current regulation states developments can donate a piece of land deemed open space to the Town in lieu of paying a fee. However, this practice results in the Town receiving un-enjoyable/un-desirable random pieces of land spread throughout Town. It is a better idea to require developments pay the fee in lieu of them giving the Town un-enjoyable/undesirable land. Funds received would support Opens Space initiatives.
 - Franklin Hills Golf Course contains a conservation easement that should be inspected every 3 years.
 - Hyde Park contains a conservation easement
 - Pautipaug Hill/Coit Sub-division contains a conservation easement
 - Murphy Road – possible Town owned easement

- c. Appointment Letters for AgCon members: 5 positions and 3 alternates.

MOTION #2 (03.18.21): made by Susan Allen SECONDED BY Alan Holmberg that the Agriculture & Conservation Commission recommend the following appointment to the Board of Selectmen:

- Roland Mihok as a regular member to fill the 3-year term of Peter Calvert ending 9/19/22

VOICE VOTE: UNANIMOUS;

MOTION CARRIES

It was also recommended the Board of Selectmen re-appoint the following members:

- Gail Miller as a regular member with term ending 9/19/24
- Craig Staebner as a regular member with term ending 9/19/24

- d. Advertise Local Farms: The Lebanon Life advertised local farms in the November 2020 issue. It was very nice and interesting. Craig Staebner put a list together for us with all our local farms in town.

8. New Business:

- a. AgCon 2021/22 Budget

MOTION #3 (03.18.21): made by Roland Mihok SECONDED BY Alan Holmberg that the Agriculture & Conservation Commission approve budget **as presented** – same as last year

- Line Item 1450.10 Advertising/Misc. \$150.00
- Line Item 1450.20 Open Space \$250.00

VOICE VOTE: UNANIMOUS;

MOTION CARRIES

- b. **Open Space Fund:** The Town Open Space fund policy needs review. Original policy was developed in 2014. Policy was developed to state rules of who could put money in and take money out. May 2015 the Board of Selectmen approved the account at \$150.00. The account stayed at \$150 from 2016 through 2019. The Treasurer recently indicated this line item is not a stand-alone account and is only included within a Capital Improvement Projects (CIP) area of the budget. The CIP designation allows other town financial overruns to use the open space funds to offset. AgCon would be more comfortable with the open space account having its own line item and, therefore, funds in this line item are not subject to being used to offset other overrun situations. It is important to secure open space for the enjoyment of Franklin residents from many aspects.
- c. **Farm Bureau:** No meeting.
- d. **Land Conservation Efforts:** It was noted most properties designated as 490 contain very low taxes. The Peltier Property taxes paid in 2014 and 2015 were approximately \$44 and \$45 dollars respectively. In Franklin, 125 acres of 490 designated land would be an estimated \$300 per year. Contrary to many beliefs by Town residents, the Town is not losing significant tax dollars for open space designated properties.
- e. **Ash Landfill (Putnam with regards to Franklin):** There has been some renewed interests regarding an ash landfill here in Franklin. It appears the Town of Putnam and its residents have allowed an ash fill plant in their town. This landfill will be part of a 30-year expansion. Will be taking trash from the Northeast.
- f. AgCon report – Wells in Sprague: Norwich Public Utilities (NPU) report shows recent modification to connection plans regarding the addition of 2 new interconnections with Sprague Water Sewer Authority & Ledyard Water Pollution Control. There is an emergency well along Shetucket River in Sprague if needed.

9. General Comments:

- Spotted Lantern Fly (actually not a fly) has been spotted in Fairfield County and has been proven to wipe out grape vineyards, fruit trees, plant nursery, and timber. The spotted lanternfly feeds by sucking out the sap of a variety of trees and plants, but they have favored grape vines during the crucial vineyard harvest season of late summer and early fall
- 2020 was a banner year for Bald Eagles

10. Public Comment: N/A

11. Adjournment:

MOTION #4 (03.18.20): made by made by Alan Holmberg SECONDED BY Roland Mihok that the Agriculture & Conservation Commission adjourn the meeting at 8:35 p.m.

VOICE VOTE: UNANIMOUS;

MOTION CARRIES

Respectfully submitted,
Sherry Pollard