

TOWN OF CONCORD Concord Agriculture Committee

Committee Charge

“As a significant initiative, we are recommending several steps to preserve economic viability of agriculture and preserve agricultural land use”.

2005 Comprehensive Long Range Plan

A. Purpose

The purpose of the Agriculture Committee is to provide a forum for the discussion of interest and concern to farmers in Concord and to advise the Board of Selectmen concerning how the town can help to support farming in Concord.

B. Background

Concord has a long and treasurer history of farming and agriculture is central to the community’s identity. A variety of social trends in the late 20th century have combined to threaten the future of small-scale farming in New England. Most notable of these trends is the rising cost of land and the associated rising level of local property taxes. The adoption of Mass. General Laws Chapter 61A alleviated some of the property tax pressure on farmers, but there are still a variety of taxing, land use, and operational challenges that face the small family farmer. It is hoped that the Agriculture Committee will identify ways in which the community can continue to provide meaningful support to its local farmers and to help make farming a viable way of life well into the future.

C. Membership

The Agriculture Committee shall be comprised of five residents of the Town appointed by the Board of Selectmen each for staggered three-year terms. The membership shall be as follows:

Three members representing farmer interest who are engaged in farming
Two citizens at-large interested in promoting farming

In addition, the Committee may comprise up to three associate members – residents of the Town appointed by the Board of Selectmen for three year terms. Individuals appointed should have at least some familiarity with the farming/gardening community and specific skills that can be of use to the Committee. They may be farmers or citizens at-large.

Associate Members may participate fully in all Committee matters, although their votes may only be counted when substituting for a full member in the event of an unfilled vacancy, absence, or a conflict of interest at a meeting, if such conditions result in a lack of quorum

D. Duties and Responsibilities

1. To serve as facilitators for encouraging the pursuit of agriculture in Concord, including the promotion of agricultural-based economic opportunities in town;
2. To serve as the agricultural liaison with other town boards and committees, and to act as mediators, advocates, educators, and/or negotiators on farming issues in the community.
3. To work toward the preservation of prime agricultural lands.
4. To collect and review information concerning the current state of farming in Concord, and to develop a work-plan to guide its activities.
5. To consult with Concord farmers to develop a list of possible actions public and private entities might take to foster continued agriculture in Concord. The committee's meetings shall also provide a public forum on an on-going basis for farmers to identify their concerns and suggest ways that the community could support farming.
6. To hold a public hearing at least once each year intended to inform the community about issues of concern to farmers;
7. To suggest ways in which State and Town law or regulations impacting farmers might be modified to remove impediments to local farming, consistent with community values, and to advise the Board of Selectmen
8. To advise the Board of Selectmen on all matters involving farmers and town government;
9. To identify ways in which municipally-owned properties might be better used to support agriculture, consistent with the purpose for which the land was acquired; this is likely to include working closely with the Natural Resources Commission regarding the use of conservation lands.
10. To meet regularly and annually elect a chair and clerk.
11. To prepare a report on the condition of farming in Concord within one year of appointment and to report annually to the Selectmen thereafter;

E. Other Considerations

The Agriculture Committee is responsible for conducting its activities in a manner which is in compliance with all relevant State and local laws and regulations, including but not limited to, the Open Meeting Law, Public Records Law and Conflict of Interest Law. The Committee shall consult with the Town Manager concerning the allocation of town staff or financial resources toward this project.

In office: (1) Excerpt from the 2005 "Comprehensive Long Range Plan" concerning agriculture.



Jeffrey S. Wieand, Chair