MANSFIELD AGRICULTURE COMMITTEE

Statement for July 23, 2012, public hearing concerning a "Right to Farm Ordinance and Municipal Tax Incentives for Farms".

The Agriculture Committee recommended in February that the Town Council consider adopting these ordinances to support a viable agricultural economy in Mansfield. The committee made this recommendation after months of research and discussions with other towns. In addition, the committee conducted a survey of Mansfield's agricultural products and services providers in 2011 and hosted a listening session with the farmers in March of 2012.

The **Right to Farm ordinance** is in two parts: The "Findings and Purpose" section is a declaration of our town's support for agriculture and agricultural businesses. This is Mansfield's part of the ordinance. The "Right to Farm" section duplicates the state's right-to-farm law.

The **three farm tax incentives** represent a small part of the Town's budget and are minimal in comparison to the cost of incentives to other business, such as tax abatements granted to the Storrs Center project and the Town's contribution to improving the Four Corners infrastructure. Like these projects, farm tax incentives are an investment to encourage local businesses. They also can help keep the mill rate down by encouraging farms to remain in production rather than convert to houses, which use more Town services than farms do.

Two specific items about these tax incentives:

- They are available only to farms with a minimum of $15,000 in gross sales or expenses.
- They complement the state's farm tax incentives, which are already processed by the Town's Assessor. Thus, adding the Town's tax incentives would require minimal extra work for the Assessor or for a farmer.

One or more of these ordinances have been adopted by many Connecticut towns, including our neighbors in Coventry and Ashford. Having them on our Town's books shows our agricultural community that Mansfield supports farming. Along with other farm-supportive actions, the ultimate benefit of these ordinances is to the Town. They encourage farmers to come to town, improve their farms, and not sell their land for housing. This is important to our Town's economy and also to securing local food sources, preserving scenic vistas, and maintaining our Town's rural character.

The Planning and Zoning Commission, Sustainability Committee and Open Space Preservation Committee have all supported these ordinances. They understand the importance of maintaining farming and farmland in our Town and how these ordinances can contribute to that goal.

Thank you for considering our recommendation.

Mary L. Stanton

From: Bryan Kiel <twinpondfarms@msn.com>
Sent: Thursday, July 19, 2012 12:48 PM
To: Town Clerk
Subject: Town meeting on Right To Farm and Farm Tax Abatements

Importance: High

To Town Clerk-can you pls add this memo to upcoming public hearing on proposed Ag ordinances scheduled for 7/23/2012. Pls acknowledge receipt of.
Twin Pond Farms

To: Town Council:
07/19/2012
Twin Pond Farms
438 & 483 Browns Road
Storrs,Ct 06268

I'm not able to attend Monday nights meeting of the town council but would like to let you know that Twin Pond Farms supports the pending Town ordinances. We are a midsize farm and the proposed ordinances would greatly help us with preserving our farm and making it a viable asset to us but also to the Town of Mansfield,CT.

Thank you
Twin Pond Farms

Mary L. Stanton

From: Betsy Paterson <betsy_paterson@hotmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, July 24, 2012 12:35 PM
To: Mary L. Stanton

Date: Mon, 23 Jul 2012 06:49:50 -0700
From: hvistorrs@yahoo.com
To: TownCouncil@mansfieldct.org

Farming, historically, was THE only livelihood for English colonists. Culturally it still defines New England even though only a minority of people engage in the occupation.Farming is ESSENTIAL to our way of lfie and everyone who pursues that path should be celebrated and admired. It is very tough. I support anything that will make farmers' lives easier. Farming is crucial to defining Connecticut in the larger world and to keeping us healthy with their wonderful produce at the market. (I am an agricultural and architectural historian and have written on this topic - see *Encyclopedia of New England Culture* and the Connecticut Humanities Council history on-line, and numerous issues of *Early Amerian Life*, to name a few.) Holly V. Izard

Mary L. Stanton

From: Betsy Paterson <betsy_paterson@hotmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, July 24, 2012 12:36 PM
To: Mary L. Stanton
Subject: FW: right to farm and tax abatements

Date: Mon, 23 Jul 2012 18:21:34 -0400
Subject: right to farm and tax abatements
From: rbass444@gmail.com
To: TownCouncil@MansfieldCT.org

I am writing to express my support for the right to farm and tax abatement ordinances that you are considering. Local agriculture is an important issue and we should do what we can to encourage it. Many other towns in Connecticut have already adopted such ordinances, so what is proposed is nothing at all extraordinary.

Thank you.

Sincerely,
Richard Bass
128 Dog Lane
Storrs CT 06268

Mary L. Stanton

From: Betsy Paterson <betsy_paterson@hotmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, July 24, 2012 12:36 PM
To: Mary L. Stanton
Subject: FW: Farm Ordinances submitted by the town's Agriculture Committee

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Date: Mon, 23 Jul 2012 15:11:03 -0700
From: braswell1929@yahoo.com
Subject: Farm Ordinances submitted by the town's Agriculture Committee
To: TownCouncil@mansfieldct.org

To the Mayor and Town Council,

Considering the importance of farming to the larger community, and its role in contributing to the quality of life in Mansfield, I urge you strongly to support both the Right to Farm Ordinance and those ordinances granting tax abatements for farm property and tax exemptions for farm machinery and for farm buildings and structures.

Rita Braswell

Town of Mansfield
CONSERVATION COMMISSION
Meeting of 21 March 2012
Conference B, Audrey P. Beck Building
MINUTES (Excerpt)

3. Proposed Right-to-Farm Ordinance. The Agriculture Committee has proposed that Mansfield adopt a Right-to-Farm ordinance. Sections 5 and 6 reproduce language in the Connecticut General Statutes blocking nuisance suits against "generally accepted agricultural practices," save in cases of "willful or reckless misconduct." The ordinance would add no regulations to those already in effect; its purpose is to rather put the Town on record in support of agriculture in Mansfield.

Buck asked how "willful or reckless misconduct" is to be determined. Mr. Cyr replied that complaints alleging such misconduct would go to the Commissioner of Agriculture for investigation. Lehmann questioned whether the Town should endorse (5) of Section 5, which excuses "water pollution from livestock or crop production activities, except the pollution of public or private drinking water supplies, provided such activities conform to acceptable management practices for pollution control approved by the Commissioner of Energy and Environmental Protection." He observed that "generally accepted agricultural practices" in the Midwest have created a large 'dead zone' in the Gulf of Mexico from fertilizer run-off. Facchinetti had similar misgivings about (4) of Section 5, which excuses "use of chemicals, provided such chemicals and the method of their application conform to practices approved by the Connecticut Commissioner of Energy and Environmental Protection or, where applicable, the Commissioner of Public Health." He indicated that he did not have a great deal of confidence in state regulation of agricultural chemicals, based on attempts to get UConn to assess the impact of chemical applications at the Agronomy Farm on local wells. In response, Mr. Cyr suggested that whatever pollution results from agricultural use of fertilizer and chemicals is likely to be worse if farms are converted to housing developments with acres of lawn.

A motion (Kessel, Silander) that the Conservation Commission approves the proposed Town Right-to-Farm Ordinance failed (for: Kessel, Silander; against: Buck, Facchinetti; abstaining: Booth, Lehmann). A subsequent **motion** (Lehmann, Silander) was adopted (all present in favor save Buck, opposed):

> The Conservation Commission supports the goals of the proposed Right-to-Farm ordinance, as announced in Section 3, but has reservations about the Town's endorsing (4) and (5) of Section 5 (notwithstanding their inclusion in the state statutes).

7/23/12

To: Town Council

From: Betty Wassmundt

About renaming Wormwood Hill Green, I urge you not to do that. Surely the Atwoods have been an important family in this town; there is a village and road named after them. Isn't that enough? The Stearns are an important family in town; there is a road named after them. Will you find a green to name after them too? Why not? If Atwood deserves a green, Stearns deserves a green.

Wormwood Hill Green has been known as that forever. Who is going to know where Atwood Green is? People likely would expect it to be in Atwoodville but it won't be.

As far as the Atwood's being recognized for maintaining the green, well, Fred Humphrey for years cut the triangle as one enters my road. Should you name the space "Humphrey Triangle"?

I try very hard to maintain a stretch of my road in front of Uconn's land; I try to keep it free of invasives and debris. I request you name that "Betty's Stretch". Maybe it would make me "feel good".

Please don't rename the Wormwood Hill Green.

I see you will discuss the Senior Center, I request that someone cut the bittersweet from the trees in front of said Center. Those trees will die soon from the bittersweet. I've brought this up before, both here and to public works. Recently I spoke with the Senior Center director who told me that she placed such a request some time ago. She went on to say that she has several much more important requests outstanding for maintenance but that they don't get tended to. Why?

Thank you.