

**EAST AMWELL
AGRICULTURAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE
Meeting Minutes
September 17, 2012**

Call to Order:

The September regular meeting of the East Amwell Township Agricultural Advisory Committee was called to order at 7:39p.m at the East Amwell Township municipal building. Present were Kit Crisafulli, Bill duFosse, Frances Gavigan (Committee Chair), Gail Glashoff and Recording Secretary Christine Rosikiewicz. John Perehinys was absent.

In Compliance with the Open Public Meetings Act Christine Rosikiewicz stated that this was a regular meeting, pursuant to the meeting notice published in the January 26, 2012 Hunterdon County Democrat. Notice of this meeting was filed in the Township Clerk's office, sent to the Hunterdon County Democrat, the Trenton Times and the Star Ledger. The agenda was posted on the municipal building bulletin board on September 9, 2012.

Announcements:

There were no announcements.

Approval of Minutes:

B. duFosse made a motion to approve the August 20, 2012 meeting minutes. F. Gavigan seconded the motion. All were in favor; the August 20, 2012 meeting minutes were approved.

Open to the Public:

F. Gavigan opened the meeting to the public.

Being as no members of the public came forward F. Gavigan made a motion to close the meeting to the public; G. Glashoff seconded it. All were in favor; the motion passed.

Old Business:

Farmland/Open Space Preservation Committee: B. duFosse reported that the two Polhemus lots were approved; there is an aerial picture of the properties in the municipal building lobby. The Committee briefly discussed these lots. D&R and East Amwell Township funded this purchase.

CADB: F. Gavigan reported that she attended the August CADB meeting. The Hyanis greenhouses were discussed; right to farm pertains to them. Ms. Gavigan read from

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CADB minutes regarding changes in the resolution for Stonybrook Meadows Farm; these changes did not change the intent of the resolution. The right to farm for Stonybrook Meadows was approved.

Ms. Gavigan referred to a letter from the Readington Township clerk regarding Readington Township's Resolution Opposing A-323/S-2074. The Committee discussed this resolution and its impact on usage rights on preserved farms at length. F. Gavigan suggested a recommendation to Township Committee to support this resolution and permit farmers to hold special occasion events. The different activities permitted on preserved versus non-preserved farms were noted. F. Gavigan referenced Assembly Bill 323 and Senate Bill 2074 on-line and read portions to the Committee. Different activities permitted were discussed.

G. Glashoff made a motion indicating that the Township considers a resolution supporting A-323/S-2074 to permit agricultural tourism events on preserved farmland provided that the preserved farmland is part of a functioning farm operation engaged in agricultural or horticultural production and that the County Ag. Development Boards as part of their annual inspection shall monitor and confirm. The Committee supports it because it would be agritourism but not unchecked or unlimited as it would have to be under fifty percent. K. Crisafulli seconded the motion.

G. Glashoff inquired about a Farm Forum; F. Gavigan suggested a Farm Forum on agritourism. The Committee discussed possible speakers for the forum.

Planning Board: The Tree Harvesting Ordinance is going back to Township Committee for introduction. F. Gavigan went over the memo from Attorney Cushing regarding this ordinance.

Website: There have been no updates made.

Budget:

It was noted that the budget was "good".

New Business:

There was no New Business discussed.

Correspondence:

There was no comment on any correspondence.

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Open to the Public:

Ms. Glashoff made a motion to open to the public; K. Crisafulli seconded it. The meeting was opened to the public.

Cassie Qian (3 Iron Horse Rd.) approached the dais. She commented that it was her first time at an Agricultural Advisory Committee meeting. She expected the discussions to be on what crops to plant and not following rules. Her observation is that it is not normal to talk to a computer but it is normal to do field labor work.

F. Gavigan explained that the part of the purpose of the Committee is to advise the Township and raise issues and concerns of the agricultural community such as laws and actions against farms. She spoke about the use of a computer as a tool.

Ms. Qian expressed her concerns for the Township as they are preserving farmland. She spoke of preserving people including skills being lost due to lack of people wanting to farm.

F. Gavigan expressed her fear was an increasingly micromanaged set of rules and ordinances are going to either drive out or kill off agriculture. She noted the expense of farming equipment and that it is easier and more affordable to sell to a developer.

Ms. Qian told the Committee that now there is local food, someday maybe there will be no local food. She expressed that farmland should not be for tourism.

Ms. Gavigan noted that the agritourism educates people on farm life. She provided the example of farm camp at a local farm.

The Committee and Ms. Qian further discussed the importance of farming. Ms. Gavigan referred to farmers who need to hire lawyers and defend themselves due to people filing and appealing.

Ms. Qian spoke of taxes and brief comments were exchanged with the Committee regarding wind and solar power.

Ms. Glashoff made a motion to close to the public; B. duFosse seconded it. The meeting was closed to the public.

F. Gavigan commented that a community garden was suggested at the last Township Committee meeting. This item was briefly discussed.

Adjournment:

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G. Glashoff made a motion to adjourn the meeting; B. duFosse seconded it. All were in favor; the meeting was adjourned at 8:48pm.

Christine Rosikiewicz, Recording Secretary