

**MINUTES OF WORKSHOP
HELD BY THE PLANNING AND ZONING COMMISSION
NOVEMBER 20, 2017**

ROLL CALL:

Members Present: Eric Prause, Chairman
Michael Stebe, Secretary
Jessica Scorso
Timothy Bergin

Alternates: Patrick Kennedy
Jay Stoppelman
Teresa Ike

Also Present: Gary Anderson, Director of Planning
Renata Bertotti, Senior Planner
Matthew Bordeaux, Environmental
Planner/Wetlands Agent
Nancy Martel, Recording Secretary

Time Convened: 7:33 P.M.

AGENDA: To obtain input from the farming and agriculture community in relation to the goals of Manchester 2020.

Mr. Anderson opened the meeting, stating that the intent of the workshop is to receive input on how to better identify and discuss agricultural uses as part of the zoning regulations in the Town of Manchester. It is certainly something that the Planning wants to see as part of a town that has an agricultural past, present and future. The Commission and Staff thought that the best way forward was to talk to some people in the agricultural field, in the farming field, and to hear their thoughts first before delving into anything else.

Mr. Bordeaux reported that he is acquainted with most of the attendees. He stated that the workshop is in response to recent topics in the news. His presentation will set the stage for a conversation and hopefully attendees can provide feedback for Planning to consider possible regulation amendments or direction given to Planning from the town's Plan of Conservation and Development.

Why are we here?

Mr. Bordeaux related that agriculture remains a desirable land use and provides balance to the Town of Manchester with the goal of retaining farms in Manchester and promoting future farming. In order to keep farms economically viable, farmers across the state and across the nation have gotten creative with means to attract customers and sell products. The reality is that

creativity has outpaced the Town's regulations and many communities are responding accordingly, he said. The Planning and Zoning Commission is charged with considering the impacts that are inherent in a zoning district where the primary uses include residential and agricultural activities, he explained.

Where do we stand now? What do we have in our Regulations? What do we have written in documents?

According to Mr. Bordeaux, agriculture is basically a permitted use, albeit currently undefined, in the Rural Residential zone, which is the only zoning district in town where agriculture is a permitted use. Agriculture and a series of other uses are among the permitted uses in the Rural Residential zoning district regulations, which include farming, including dairy; livestock raising; horticulture; keeping of horses; and a number of various accessory uses. He noted that the keeping of chickens has been expanded to the remainder of the residential zones in town, a zoning district where the minimum lot size is a mere 30,000 sq. ft., or 2/3 of an acre. It is possible to concentrate a lot of activity on a small lot in and around residential uses, he said.

Mr. Bordeaux stated that the Town recently adopted a new Plan of Conservation and Development. At that time, after gathering feedback from the community, one of the principles was to preserve and promote agriculture as a desired land use. In fact, that is a growth management principle charged by the State to communities. Under that growth management principle, he reported, Planning decided that one of the goals would be to review the zoning regulations and consider amendments to protect and promote farming and to protect both agriculture and residential uses, considering all State-defined agriculture activity as well as accessory activity that could support the economic viability of farms. That is the challenge in Manchester right now, Mr. Bordeaux said.

How to do that? What to consider? What amendments to consider?

Mr. Bordeaux stated that Planning is trying to gather feedback for direction. The attendees are speaking to the Planning and Zoning Commission who ultimately would be in charge of adopting any regulations that are proposed going forward, he explained. Meanwhile, Staff would be able to consider feedback in drafting regulations.

What is a farm?

The Town does not have a definition of farm, Mr. Bordeaux said.

How big is it? What activities does that include? What is the buzzword "agritourism"?

(Inaudible comment from the public.)

Mr. Bordeaux reported that the Town does not have a regulation specifically stating that goat yoga is a permitted activity. With an accessory activity that the Town has no regulation for, such as goat yoga, the current regulations state that, if it is not explicitly permitted, then it is prohibited. If the Town receives a complaint that a resident is conducting activity that is not explicitly permitted, it is the Zoning Enforcement Officer's responsibility to respond. Mr. Bordeaux explained that, in the case of goat yoga, the ZEO interpreted the endeavor as more of a health and wellness activity rather than an agricultural activity. It was not the production of

anything or growing of anything, he said. Health and wellness is not a permitted activity in the Rural Residential zone and the Zoning Enforcement Officer issued the Cease and Desist order, Mr. Bordeaux said. The owner appealed the order and the Zoning Board of Appeals, without a definition in the zoning regulations, perceived goat yoga to be similar to an agricultural use, he noted.

(Inaudible comment from the public.)

Mr. Bordeaux responded that is one direction, adopting a definition of agriculture. Considering the many potential activities that could be considered agriculture, there is potential neighborhood impact in a zoning district with a minimum lot size of 30,000 sq. ft. When considering agritourism, there is no specific activity, he reported, and it is basically any activity that can attract individuals to the farm, such as a wedding venue.

(Inaudible comment from the public.)

Agritourism: What is it? How is agritourism different from traditional farming activity?

Farming is commonly thought of as growing something, Mr. Bordeaux declared. An individual might start to process a product developed onsite to be sold either at a farm stand or elsewhere. Most people would perceive that as what traditional farming is, Mr. Bordeaux assumed. In reading the State's definition, that is generally what is stated, he said - some post-processing of the product that is generated on site.

What are other similar size communities doing?

Mr. Bordeaux reported that Planning is aware that the Town of South Windsor, seemingly in response to what happened with goat yoga, is actually in the process of drafting and attempting to adopt their own regulations on agritourism. It does not mean that Manchester needs to go in that direction, in his opinion, but their efforts should be kept in mind.

What have been farmers' challenges?

Mr. Bordeaux asked what challenges the members of the farming and agriculture community have faced, other than making the most out of what they have available on site, limited lots, limited soils, limited water resources, etc. He asked about the challenges the attendees have dealt with regarding their neighbors. He explained that those are the questions Planning could use to lead the discussion, the Commission may have many more questions, and the attendees may have ideas that the Commission and Staff have not thought of. He observed that the issues will not be solved in this workshop, but the attendees' feedback will lead the Town's direction. Mr. Bordeaux referred to the Plan of Conservation and Development, and said there is a strong desire to keep agriculture viable in Manchester and, therefore, the Town is seeking input.

Anthony Ferretti introduced himself as well as his wife, Rose, owners of Rock & Rose Ranch on Porter Street. He explained that theirs is a 14-acre horse farm that has operated without any issues for 87 years until one of their neighbors complained. The neighbors moved next to a horse farm and began complaining about horse odor, he said. He explained that they spent several months on the zoning process because, when the zoning maps were filed, their horse barn has the zoning line running right through it. Therefore, Mr. Ferretti said, it is Rural Residence

zone on one side of the horse barn and Residence AA on the other side of the horse barn; on the same property, the line between zones is down the center of the barn. After spending \$7,000 with the former mayor of the Town, they hired a lawyer, he said. He reported that the Town declared that, even though their property is an 87-year-old farm, the line will remain as is and the farm would be grandfathered in. Mr. Ferretti informed the members that they own 14 acres for horse farming, and at the time all this transpired, they had nine horses and were told they cannot have more than nine horses. That is counter to the agricultural regulations, which state they can have a certain number of horses based on acreage, he said. In reality, he noted, they could have 24 horses. However, they are so apprehensive, they are afraid to take any action, he said. Mr. Ferretti stated that they had the Health Department out to the property probably 30 or 40 times, the Zoning Enforcement Officer out there maybe 12 times, and Mr. Bordeaux on several occasions. They had to enact a viable manure plan and pay the cost to pour concrete and put barricades around the area, although they give their manure away, he said. He explained that they feel as though they are in a stuck mode as far as what can be done with their horse farm and are frightened. Mr. Ferretti stated that the fact that the Planning Commission let stand a border line that runs through the farm and through the barn is ludicrous. He reported that they had chickens on the Residence AA side of the property which is why the chicken regulation was changed, but before it was changed, they were required to get rid of their 39 chickens.

Mr. Ferretti noted that the intent of defining a farm and the effort to be more farm-friendly was not evident in their experience. He explained that they purchased two pieces of property, 571 and 599 Porter Street, which total 14 acres, though the farm itself is 11 acres. He reported that a citizen came onto their property to take pictures of horse manure and then presented them to the Commission, after which the zone change was denied, even after 87 years. The barn was built with permits and the Town was aware that it would be a horse barn on a horse farm, he said. Mr. Ferretti explained that their hands are tied and they are unable to do anything for fear that somebody is going to knock on the door and throw a new regulation at them, a new plan for manure. The Town Attorney at the time noted that they did not live on 599 Porter Street, although they own it, and a Cease & Desist Order was issued, requiring them to move to 599 Porter Street, he said.

Mr. Ferretti reported that they are developing a plot of land where they would like to have a co-op for the community to farm. It is about two acres and they would like to divide it and let the community come in and section it out, but they are fearful. He praised the effort of the Commission and the Planning Department. He stated that when people move in next door and live there for five years after the farm has existed for 87 years, they should not be able to dictate the rules. As they do not generate a large income on their farm, he explained, they do not want to incur a large expense to fight the ruling. He hoped that the Commission and the Planning Department would be able to help the farming community.

Mr. Ferretti questioned how they can be a horse farm when no one but them can ride the horses.

Mr. Ferretti explained that they do not necessarily plan to have a riding academy and they hope the Commission can ease the regulations for farms.

Ms. Bertotti replied that she, the Staff and the Commission understand.

Mr. Ferretti countered that three years ago no one understood.

Ms. Bertotti referred to the statement about holding weddings at the site.

Ms. Rose Chirico introduced herself and affirmed that she would like to have weddings on the site; there is a large basketball court and an organic garden and she would like to do farm to table meals, as she owned a catering business in the past. She noted that she would like to create a business like Dondero's Farm in Glastonbury, where they serve lunch, but does not think she can do that in Manchester as she does not feel comfortable. Ms. Chirico stated that they recently cleared an area for horses in the front of the property and will be purchasing arborvitae as they feel as though they have to hide their farm. She explained that they have a beautiful barn where people have had pictures taken because of the beautiful setting, and she would like to set up a kitchen and put an 8-bay garage in for a licensed kitchen to hold events. Ms. Chirico noted that Dondero's serves lunch. She is interested in selling the produce that she cans to the public, she said.

Mr. Ferretti noted that, under the current regulations, they cannot give riding lessons.

Mr. Ferretti explained they would like to do all the things that a normal horse farm does; i.e., riding lessons, wagon rides, selling produce, and developing the land.

Ms. Bertotti asked if they grow crops.

Mr. Ferretti replied they do grow crops, on three acres.

Ms. Chirico noted they usually I have a stand at the bottom of the driveway and to sell their extra produce.

Mr. Ferretti reiterated his plan for the land currently being developed is to divide it up for a gardening co-op so everybody could have a section of land to grow what they want.

Ms. Chirico noted that she had spoken with Mr. Bordeaux about a brook that runs through the property to the next house where she would like to create a pond. However, she explained, Mr. Bordeaux informed her that they would have to go through Zoning as it is wetlands and they must stay 100 ft. away from there. Her intent is to make a pond for her horses to drink water, she said.

Mr. Fred Lea stated that she needs to present the information to Zoning, if she is seeking a change.

Ms. Chirico stated that her property is not zoned for farming and they went through those steps and could not appeal.

Ms. Bertotti reiterated that their zoning district did not change, but there are other ways to do that. One of the possible solutions would be to regulate farms regardless of the zoning district, she said. There could be an overlay zone related to farms and the farms would be regulated by size and use, regardless of the zoning district, Ms. Bertotti said.

Ms. Chirico noted that she would like to hold events; she has five children and hopes one of them will be able to be married on her land.

Mr. Lea interjected that there are two additional horse farmers in town.

(Inaudible member of public) Those horse farmers conduct all Ms. Chirico's desired activities.

Mr. Prause stated there is a Connecticut Department of Agriculture web page defining agritourism, which is more of a guideline than an actual regulation. It points out a lot of things that Ms. Chirico and Mr. Ferretti discussed, such as hayrides, corn mazes, farm dinners, wineries, pick-your-own and on-farm agricultural festivals, he explained, and those are things the Commission can probably adopt, which are probably low impact as long as there is enough parking and access.

Mr. Ferretti reminded the Commission that they have 14 acres.

Mr. Bordeaux stated that, as in every use in every zone, the Commission is regulating impact; how many potential visitors, parking, and types of events.

Mr. Ferretti interjected that there is no way to know that unless they are allowed to do it.

Mr. Bordeaux explained that if there are surrounding residential uses, a large parking lot would be inappropriate up against the next-door-neighbor's house. The intent is to anticipate uses, he said, e.g., a wedding can draw hundreds of people.

Mr. Ferretti reported a farmer who is making a career out of a haunted hayride. He stated that their property would be perfect for that as there are trails cut out for the wagons, but he worries about the fallout if they were to try it.

Ms. Tracy Longoria, 555 Lydall Street, introduced herself and stated that Mr. Ferretti would have to become a registered farm and a 490. She explained that a farm is a registered piece of property in 490. That is the first step, she reported, and without that, in her opinion, they might not technically be zoned for a farm.

Mr. Ferretti replied that half of the property is.

Ms. Longoria countered that half of their property is a farm and they need to go through Zoning to have the other part of their property changed over.

Mr. Ferretti noted that they took those steps and their application was denied.

Ms. Longoria explained that the meeting is to give the Board some direction on how they can change the regulations to help all farmers in the town. In her opinion, the first step is to answer "how big." She noted that activities on a farm are very vast; i.e., a vegetable farm, livestock, aquaculture, vegetable planting, raising fish. She implored the Commission to be very broad-minded with the definition of a farm and do their research into various farms. She stated that agritourism, in her opinion, is any activity that brings people to a farm that will produce sales. On her farm, she explained, they offer educated farm tours, bringing in people so that they can see what they are producing, such as their livestock, fiber products, and meat products. Using their goat yoga as an example, she conveyed that it is agritourism because it is bringing people to the farm to interact with their animals; if they decide to sell the animals, they have had interaction with people. Ms. Longoria added that, while individuals are on their property, they have the opportunity to purchase other products made on their farm. She added that an activity

does not have to be a sale; i.e., it could be a hay ride or corn maze which brings people to the farm and they can purchase other products.

Ms. Longoria spoke to different activities. Everyone wants to show off their farm, she explained, and everybody would love to have birthday parties on their farm. People are celebrating their special activity and are doing it on a farm, which is making money for the farm. She noted that weddings are huge agritourism activities. She cited hay rides, corn mazes, and fall festivals. Ms. Longoria reported that, during their goat yoga application process, they spoke with their insurance agency, who explained that there is a farm somewhere in Connecticut doing war re-enactments on their farm, an activity on the farm bringing people there and giving them an opportunity to purchase other things. She reported that a farm in Connecticut owned by Jess Stone does stargazing, farm to table, hosting bands, and anything to make her farm successful.

One of the items on Mr. Bordeaux's list, Ms. Longoria noted, is parking. Currently, she said, the regulations state that in any type of business, parking must be on asphalt, which is not conducive to a farm whatsoever. When people go to a farm, they are not expecting to park in a parking lot; they are expecting to park on the grass. She noted that she feels very strongly about this matter, keeping in mind that whatever space is being utilized for parking (a pasture or a field) must have the regulated space for parking

Mr. D. J. Lupacchino, 555 Lydall Street, introduced himself and noted that in speaking with other towns about parking issues on farms, he learned that the Town of Simsbury allows parking on the grass at farms. The farms are not exempt from the regulated size of a parking space. He proposed that the Planning and Zoning staff would visit the location to measure the space, and if it was a normal paved parking lot, there could be 50 cars there. He explained that for a particular event, the owner could park 50 cars on a grassed area at the farm.

Mr. Bordeaux asked Mr. Lupacchino how a farmer would know how many spaces would be appropriate. There could be goat yoga on one day, a wedding another day, and an event that draws three people on another day, he said.

Mr. Lupacchino stated that, in his opinion, what Mr. Davis said would be appropriate. He noted that Mr. Davis commented that whatever the event might be, the owner would go to the Zoning Enforcement Officer ahead of time with an expectation of parking required for a specific event. This would require working closely with Planning and Zoning, he said.

Mr. Bordeaux surmised that in that instance, Planning would draft a regulation stating that a farm is allowed to do particular uses, perhaps listing the uses or a range of uses, and the owner would approach the Zoning Enforcement Officer specifically for his determination.

Ms. Longoria disagreed with that suggestion. In her opinion, parking should be regulated as with any other building. The Fire Marshal determines how many people can be accommodated and the Zoning Enforcement Officer should establish the limit for parking on the property, she said.

Mr. Lupacchino referenced a letter he received from a State representative regarding agritourism and the regulations on much of the east coast. He referred to Virginia's Code 3.2-6400, New Hampshire's Code 221:34a, and those established agritourism definitions. In his opinion, Manchester could be in the forefront by reverse-drafting legislation by regulating agritourism on the town level and perhaps the State would follow suit.

Mr. Stoppelman referred to the question “What is a farm?” He questioned the 490 that had been specified.

Mr. Lupacchino replied that 490 specifies the actual land use. Land is broken down into different use values vs. being taxed on the residential tax value of the entire property. He explained that 490 actually breaks the land down into use.

Mr. Stoppelman questioned who makes this determination.

Mr. Lupacchino responded that the State of Connecticut makes the determination and it is filed with the Town of Manchester. A map is drawn up breaking down certain areas of the property; i.e., wood lots, pasture, and wetlands, and rather than being taxed on the residential value of that property, it is taxed on the use value of the wood lot, the pasture or the wetlands, he explained. The State of Connecticut has a set rate per acre for each use.

Mr. Fred Lea, Mulberry Tree Farm, Gardner Street, introduced himself. He reported that his farm is considered prime land for growing and thus is one to be preserved. He noted that Mr. Bordeaux’s map points to areas that should be preserved for future farmland. Mr. Lea mentioned that, when searching for the definition of a farm, the results switch to agriculture and there is no definition of a farm.

Mr. Stoppelman noted that Manchester is a suburb and must determine the definition of a farm.

Mr. Bordeaux reported that some communities call a farm any place where agricultural activities are occurring. The State definition of farming is agriculture.

Ms. Chirico agreed, agriculture or farming.

Mr. Bordeaux noted that he provided the Commission with the definition, as raw as it is, to help them become familiar with that term.

Ms. Longoria also mentioned bathroom facilities, as that was another hurdle they crossed at their farm. Luckily, she reported, it was approved and they were allowed to have port-a-potties on their farm. She stated that most of the farms she has visited have utilized port-a-potties.

Ms. Bertotti explained that the facilities were under the Health Code and a State Health Code variance was required.

Ms. Longoria responded that she did not recall if it was necessarily required, but she did obtain one.

Ms. Bertotti reiterated that had to do with the Health Code.

Ms. Longoria said she assumed the issue will come up again.

Mr. Lea explained that he does not want people on his land, as his land is very precious to him. He noted that he is in the Historic Society and is on the Woodbridge Farm Committee, which is trying to create a farm museum in town. He reported that he does want to promote farm to plate and is interested in having events like that at his farm, proceeds from which would go to charity for farmland preservation and local soup kitchens. Mr. Lea concurred that parking is a big issue.

He remarked that a hay field is fenced off for the Glastonbury Farm Day. Local farmers do not want to pave over their land because they use it and if events don't succeed, they will plow it up again and plant.

Mr. Lea referred to bathrooms. He noted that previous speakers have spoken to port-a-potties for visitors' use. However, when he needs to hire workers, he needs facilities for them, as he cannot make his historic home handicapped-accessible. He applauded the Planning Department and the Commission for finally taking action. When he purchased his property nearly 20 years ago and when he approached the Town about returning the land to an operating farm, he was told to just go ahead. Mr. Lea did explain that the zoning that allowed a 55+ community to develop next to his property affects him greatly. He reported that abutters were charged an extra \$5,000 per lot for the view of his farm and now some of those neighbors are making his farming difficult. Required buffers should not be the responsibility of the farmer; it should be the responsibility of the developer, he said. He explained that he has 4-1/2 acres and also farms every piece of land in his neighborhood. Mr. Lea reported that he will be retiring from his job in the near future and farming is going to be his livelihood.

Ms. Bertotti requested confirmation as to the size of Mr. Lea's farm.

Mr. Lea stated that he has 4-1/2 acres but farms up to 10 acres, which he considers to be small. In addition, he is also involved with the Spruce Street project promoting urban farming. He mentioned that his neighbor's daughter moved to Detroit and is taking empty lots and turning them into farms, farming acres in the middle of the city. He noted that there are many blighted properties on Spruce Street as well as properties being torn down. Mr. Lea stated he is aware of a gentleman in Canada that makes \$150,000 on an acre, half of which he plants.

(Inaudible comment from Staff)

Mr. Lea noted that most of his neighbors are great but it only takes one to create issues. Sometimes accommodating his neighbors is detrimental to his business, and is not reciprocated, he said. He also pointed to signage explaining that they travel up and down their road to the other farms. Mr. Lea was told that there would have to be a study done of the road just to get a safety sign put up where they are hauling crops. He reported that his signs are makeshift and his stand is just an umbrella with a table. Future residential development could cost farmers their livelihood, he said.

Mr. Prause explained that the Commission is watchful to not allow things that could become nuisances to other people and noted the good points brought up about passive activities with no impact. However, he asked where the line should be drawn. He pondered allowing ATV riding on farms, but questioned whether carnivals should be allowed. Keeping the uses open-ended may create unanticipated nuisances, Mr. Prause reported, and asked how those would be addressed as they arise. Those are the Commission's challenges, he said.

Mr. Anderson reported a discussion amongst staff about the idea that these can be permitted holistically with an overlay zone. When an idea comes before the Commission, they would lay out the parking and what uses are allowed there. The Commission would essentially approve that as a package, he stated, though the challenge with that is, if it requires a change, there must be a mechanism to do that.

Mr. Lea commented that when he was on the Agriculture Commission, there was discussion about a right to farm law for Manchester. In reading the Connecticut Right To Farm law, he explained, section B states “the provisions in this section shall not apply whenever nuisance results from neglect or willful reckless misconduct in the operation.” He explained that if it refers to noise from animals or a little bit of dust, people cannot really complain, because that is just the daily operation of the farm.

Mr. Lupacchino stated that he agrees with Mr. Lea. The Town of Manchester could adopt a Right to Farm law, basically a regulation stating that, based on the State statute, these are rights to farm. If the farm smells or if there is noise from the farm operation, as long as it is part of the normal operation of a farm, and a neighbor moves in, the Town could intervene if that neighbor starts to complain and they would not be able to pursue it. Mr. Lupacchino further stated that instead of the Town being in a situation where it is obligated to respond to the complaint because the neighbor believes there is a violation, the Town can deem this is part of normal farm operations.

Mr. Lea commented that most farmers adhere to good farm practices.

Ms. Chirico agreed, stating that they value their land and would not do anything to destroy it.

Mr. Lea explained that if one of his neighbors digs a hole, he will find rocks from that hole on his property. His neighbors hired the newspaper and an attorney to complain about his fence, and rather than writing a negative article, the journalist put a nice article about his farm on the front of the paper, he said. Erecting the fence was imperative, he explained, because he was losing 400 tomato plants a night.

Mr. Anderson asked Mr. Bordeaux if the Right to Farm is an ordinance or a legislative matter.

Mr. Lea reported that the Agriculture Committee disbanded when Mr. Pellegrini announced his retirement and they never heard anything else.

Mr. Bordeaux explained that nothing was drafted. In his opinion, adopting it in Manchester would be an encouragement or a promotion. If agriculture is already a permitted use, he noted, farmers have the right to conduct everything according to best management practices. It would be the Health Department that would get involved if there was something wrong, Mr. Bordeaux reported; i.e., if manure was not processed properly or there was excessive noise or dust. Though there is a right to farm, he said, there is no definition of farming. If there is a nuisance because of dust, noise or manure, that is due to farming. However, he noted, a wedding or another event blurs the line.

Mr. Lea reported, in the State definition of agriculture, it states that agritourism is also anything related to the farm. One farm has goats and would promote goat yoga while another has horses and would like to have riding, he explained.

Mr. Bordeaux questioned the case of Ms. Longoria bringing her goats to Mr. Lea’s farm for goat yoga.

Mr. Lea stated that the State is looking into that now. The State just changed the fowl regulation, he explained, and is changing how animals travel from farm to farm. Mr. Lea commented that

he does not want to have a petting zoo and does not want to turn his farm into a circus. He wants his farm to look beautiful as he grows nice crops. He also suggested making the acquisition of farm land easier so as to discourage developers.

Ms. Bertotti stated that nobody regulates how things are bought but assumed Mr. Lea is speaking more about farmland changing to residential. She also questioned what Mr. Lea would suggest as an appropriate buffer.

Mr. Lea stated that the land adjacent to his farm was changed to Planned Residential Development zone.

Ms. Bertotti noted PRDs are only required to have a 15 ft. buffer.

Mr. Lea agreed, stating they are really close to his property.

Ms. Bertotti reiterated that the zoning district only requires 15 ft., but questioned what would be appropriate for a farm drawing many vehicles.

Mr. Lea noted that works both ways. He is now surrounded by houses and where in the past he could see every star in the sky when he first bought his property, he now has headlights shining in his bedroom and lights shining off neighbors' decks into his house. He would prefer a normal comfort zone such as when building a regular house. Mr. Lea described that the development next to his property was initially to be 23 houses, though they only built 18. He also noted that the developer planned to surround his property with white pine, which carries a disease called rust, which could affect his crops. When buffers are considered, farmers should have some input, he said.

Ms. Chirico noted that certain trees are poisonous to animals.

Mr. Lea reiterated that if a horse eats some kind of flowers, it could kill them.

Ms. Bertotti asked if there is a list of those types of plants.

Mr. Lea responded that she can look on the UConn Extension website. He reported that the 55+ community is now planting white pines even though they were not supposed to put white pines next to him and he has white pines growing through his fence that are not trimmed.

Mr. Prause replied that Mr. Lea needs to tell the Planning Department if the neighbors are not following the approved site plan.

Mr. Lea responded that he does not want to make too many waves with his neighbors because they can make lives miserable.

Mr. Bordeaux stated that Planning has developed a few ideas internally and will continue to do so with this feedback. He will be interested to see what happens in South Windsor and noted that Planning will continue to do some research.

Mr. Lea suggested that Mr. Bordeaux check the regulations in Glastonbury, and asked if the Department's ideas could be forwarded to those in attendance.

Mr. Bordeaux stated that he will do that, and asked for e-mail addresses or phone numbers. He also encouraged attendees to reach out to others who would like to be involved. The Planning Department and the Commission will continue to explore definitions and continue to expand the list based on some of the feedback about what kind of uses might be anticipated. He believed that everyone agrees with the concept of using existing material for parking. Mr. Bordeaux referred to Ms. Longoria's suggestion, which is going to be an important aspect of parking layout. The Health Department comes into play when it comes to bathroom requirements, he noted. The Health Director has a great deal of flexibility when it comes to permitting port-a-potties for temporary or long-term use, Mr. Bordeaux explained. As Mr. Anderson mentioned, Planning can lay out a couple different ideas. Perhaps one may be an overlay or just identifying a farm, he said, and allowing the farmer to make the pitch and Planning can consider the appropriate safety and accessibility requirements from that point going forward.

Mr. Anderson speculated on a couple of ways forward for the Commission's thoughts - special exception can be looked into, along with neighborhood impacts, parking, etc. A new zone, an overlay zone, will allow the Commission to do that, he explained, and certain things are allowed by right in a Rural Residence zone which would not change. Mr. Anderson surmised the idea is some sort of package that would be permitted all at once.

Mr. Bergin had a couple of thoughts on how the regulations might be organized, he said, which is a little different from what South Windsor is proposing, and slightly different from the Commission's thoughts on defining agritourism. Some are thinking of catch-all categories that would allow certain uses. It should be based on the different proposed uses discussed in this workshop, he stated. There are the primary agricultural function and accessory uses, according to Mr. Bergin. A farm stand to sell the crops that are grown would be a permitted use as of right; but then there are seasonal activities such as hay rides, which are not going to happen year round, events such as a wedding or a farm to table dinner, a hybrid business that is continually operational that may compliment the agricultural use but is a full-fledged business, or perhaps a farm to table restaurant, banquet hall or an event hall, he enumerated. When moving up the ladder, the bar may get a little higher as there is not as much concern about hay rides or farm stands. He thought that perhaps when it comes to something that is going to draw a lot of people, it would trigger a public hearing process. Mr. Bergin stated that he wholly agrees with the idea of not paving over entire fields to accommodate parking, but he thought that a small restaurant would need to be handicapped accessible and there would need to be access for emergency vehicles. There are probably a couple of uses that are tangential to agriculture that the Commission may not want to simply permit because it has a farming nexus, he assumed. He questioned whether anyone makes money off storing manure or manure sales, but that might be something the Commission would want oversight on.

Mr. Stoppelman stated that one item he heard that disturbs him was the statement that anything would be permissible as long as it was on a farm. He explained that the Commission's job is to create balance and it is a very difficult job. In terms of farming, the Commission has moved considerably from where it was 10-15 years ago and has evolved, he explained.

Mr. Anderson interjected that he had not heard anything along those lines from members of the public. He also appreciated the attendees' candor and ideas. As mentioned, he reported, Staff will certainly keep in touch. Mr. Bordeaux will be the primary contact and as this moves

forward, there will be at least one more workshop and a public hearing at some point. So those will be other opportunities for comments and ideas, he stated.

Mr. Prause reported that he and Mr. Kennedy are on the Land Acquisition and Historic Property Investment Committee, which is charged with purchasing properties throughout town and is focusing on some farm properties to make sure those are preserved. The Town is doing something proactively, he said.

Mr. Lea noted that there is no money in that account.

Mr. Prause assured him that money will be found and noted it was a bond issue.

Mr. Lea commented that the farmers he did invite to the meeting had the opinion that the Commission would do whatever they were going to do and did not feel the workshop was worth attending.

Mr. Lupacchino asked if there is a direction the Commission is focusing on introducing agritourism language.

Mr. Anderson replied that the goal is to get something in the language. Staff knows that currently it is lacking. He reported that Staff needs to get a couple of definitions and then a way to help ensure farms are economically viable in town, but needs to do that through the zoning process, which is the tool that this group has.

Mr. Prause reported that the Commission has identified some gaps in the last couple of years about things that are not in the zoning regulations that should be in there. From the sounds of it, a lot of farmers come up with ideas but hit a roadblock and did not pursue it. In his opinion, the workshop has been useful in getting the ideas out there.

Mr. Ferretti reiterated that they are apprehensive.

Mr. Lea asked if there was a way to see the current regulations.

Mr. Prause referred to the six discussion points - farming, including dairy, livestock raising, horticulture, keeping of horses and accessory uses. "Accessory uses" is the one that is tricky, he noted, and up for interpretation. He said that unless a use is explicitly stated, many times it is just not allowed.

The workshop concluded at 9:01 P.M.