

Farmland Lease Committee

Special Meeting

August 12, 2024, 5:00 p.m.

Basement Conference Room

Town Hall, 45 South Main Street, Wallingford CT

MINUTES

Committee Chair Saunders convened the meeting at 5:20 pm.

1. **Roll Call - Present:** Committee Chair Dianne Saunders; Mike Miller; and Erin O'Hare, Environmental Planner. *Not present:* Bruce Conroy. No members of the public attended.
2. **Monitoring reports for 2024** - The Committee reviewed monitoring reports for the following fields:
 - Field 20A: Mike Miller had walked the field and found it to be actively mowed for hay per the lease. It appeared the access lane delineated for that field is not able to support more modern equipment at the stream crossing, so the lessee has made arrangements with an abutter to access from another location. There were no other signs of erosion on this highly erodible site. However, the hedgerows do need to be brushed back to maintain the size of the crop area.
 - Fields 1A and 1C: Dianne Saunders had walked the fields and found them to be planted in corn, with all buffers nicely vegetated and hedgerows brushed. Of note, in 2023, the lessee had to brush back overgrowth on the eastern perimeter, and Public Works had done a commendable job of brushing back the right of way between North Branford Road and the leased fields (1A, 1B, 1C and 1D). Dianne feels this field and the conservation management areas (within leased area) should be surveyed for plants and pollinators next year, as there were abundant pollinators observed. She had sent a short video clip to Commissioners on July 29th, as a sample of the pollinator activity.
 - Commissioner Saunders shared a draft form with the most recent monitoring assignments for all fields and Commissioner Miller made a correction. The form was given to Environmental Planner O'Hare for reference.
3. **Conservation Management Areas ('CMAs')**: These are areas in or adjacent to particular leased fields that are not used for crops, but are maintained as natural areas for various reasons such as erosion control and sensitive habitats. The Committee reviewed the status of particular conservation management areas as follows:
 - a. **Field 1B (front) and 1B (rear):** Commissioner Saunders provided info and photos on these areas. The front area along the road has a detention swale for erosion control. This area is overgrown with sumac, reed canary grass, some goldenrod, and possibly other species. The rear area – located behind Field 1C, abutting the Wallingford Rod & Gun Club property - is overgrown with some

RECEIVED FOR RECORD 8/15/24

1

AT 11:40am AND RECEIVED BY
Kristen Pango (CG) TOWN CLERK

autumn olive, mugwort, some multiflora rose, and possibly reed canary grass. It is difficult to access (wet, bordered on three sides by hedgerows of other properties, lies downslope from the bedrock knoll on Field 1C). A determination will need to be made about whether to try to cut the field growth back to maintain and rejuvenate early successional habitat. This area is included in the CT DEEP Daily Permit Required Hunting program (small game), along with Fields 1A, 1C, and 1D.

- b. **Lease – Field 1A (CMA-1A):** Commissioner Saunders provided info and photos of this area, which is in the lease for Field 1A. The lessee had mowed the field periodically and autumn olives were removed from the CMA area in a prior year. A few autumn olives remain in the hedgerow abutting Field 1C.
 - c. **Town – adjacent to Field 5A leased area:** The lessee of 5A has not used or mowed the crop area. Both the crop area and the CMA areas adjacent to Field 5A are overgrown and need to be mowed. Commissioner Saunders spoke with the lessee, who has not been able to mow yet this year due to the wetter than usual field conditions. He stated he will mow everything by the end of the calendar year.
 - d. **Town – adjacent to Field 7A:** The CMAs have not been maintained by Town in quite a while. The lessee of 7A has not used or mowed the crop area. Commissioner Saunders spoke with the lessee, and this field also has been wet and is difficult due to timing to mow. Autumn olives are growing in some areas. Ms. O’Hare inquired if trees are growing in the back half of the field and Commissioner Saunders stated it is very overgrown and she needs to revisit this area.
4. **Field 14A (unbid):** It was agreed that the Commission needs to find a way to have this field mowed as no farmers are interested in it. There has been no change in the status of requested fencing formerly approved by Mayor Dickenson.
 5. **Field 20A:** As reported by Commissioner Miller in item 2 above.
 6. **Adjournment:** The meeting was adjourned at 6:30 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Dianne Saunders, Committee Chair
Acting Recording Secretary