

**W. T. PLANNING BOARD MEETING, NOVEMBER 8, 2010, 5:30 P.M.**

**PRESENT:** Ginny Jones, Susan Silva, David Douglas, Leah Smith, Bea Phear, Jim Powell

**ALSO PRESENT FOR ALL OR PART OF THE MEETING:** Christine Flynn, Sue Hopkins, Simone DeSorcy

**MINUTES**

Minutes of the November 1, 2010 meeting were approved as written.

**NEW BUSINESS**

**Right-to-Farm Bylaw, M.V. Agricultural Commission:** MVC staff person Christine Flynn and M.V. Agricultural Alliance member Sue Hopkins were present to discuss the proposed Right to Farm Bylaw and the proposed M.V. Agricultural Commission. She said that the Ag Alliance would like each town to adopt a right to farm bylaw which explicitly states that the town supports agriculture. It would be a general bylaw requiring a simple majority vote at town meeting, and does not involve any regulatory oversight on the part of the town. The Ag Alliance would be looking for a letter of support from the Planning Board.

The Ag Alliance would also like to see an Agricultural Commission set up on the island to coordinate ongoing efforts; provide advice to public entities; increase public awareness about agriculture; preserve agricultural land; provide agriculture-related mediation services; provide technical assistance to farmers; and other activities promoting agriculture. There are currently 129 Ag Commissions state-wide.

Jim said the state's Cooperative Extension Service should be involved. Ginny said that the bylaw should disallow the removal of topsoil from farm land, and noted that **recreational horseback riding is not considered an agricultural use.**

Bea said that she is concerned about the potential noise impacts resulting from the current bylaw draft; she said it is potentially unfair to abutters to allow agricultural activities 24/7. David agreed, noting that equipment such as grain dryers are very noisy. Leah agreed that machinery is the issue. Sue Hopkins noted that rich people's emergency generators are noisy too. David and Susan said emergency generators are in use temporarily. Chris Flynn said that the bylaw was an opportunity for the town to support agriculture and to outline preferred farming practices.

Susan said the state's over-regulating of farmers was the biggest problem. The Department of Agriculture doesn't do a good job helping farmers go through the process. Jim said the Cooperative Extension Services used to be well-funded; the rules need to be changed.

Ginny said that farmers' biggest problem is getting appropriate assistance with simple tasks and questions, like "why is my lamb coughing?" There is too much bureaucracy already. She said the existing Ag Society should have a funded position to help farmers. There should be a central office with an employee to help farmers deal with issues that

arise. She noted there is not a MA Farm Bureau representative on the island. Bea noted that the Ag Society's mission statement's first point is to promote agriculture. Jim said we need someone from the Cooperative Extension Service to teach best practices. Chris Flynn said these are all valid points.

Leah asked whether there would be an updated soils study of the island. Chris said that the prime ag soils update is underway for an accurate inventory. David said there are lots of errors on the current maps.

Ginny said she is concerned about duplicative efforts. Farmers are often too busy or tired to attend the many meetings that already take place; why create another level of bureaucracy. She noted, however, that it is important not to overlook any ways to support agriculture.

Back to noise impacts, Bea said she didn't want to give any ammunition to anybody not wanting to be neighborly.

Ginny spoke to the importance of aquaculture in our economy.

Chris Flynn mentioned that the state had recently changed the language in 40A, the Zoning Act, to allow farming by right on any lot of two acres or more (down from five acres or more). Simone will research how this affects West Tisbury.

The meeting was adjourned at 6:40 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,  
Simone DeSorcy, administrator

**Approved November 15, 2010**