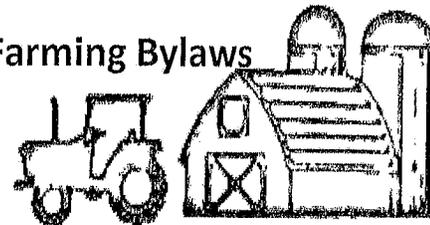


Frequently Asked Questions about Proposed Farming Bylaws

Spring Town Meeting
May 11, 2015 at 6:30pm
ORRHS Auditorium



Farming has been a part of Mattapoissett's economic structure and cultural landscape for over 300 years, why do we need a "Right to Farm" general bylaw now?

Right to Farm laws are nothing new. In fact, farming in Mattapoissett has been governed by a group of laws and regulations described as the Massachusetts Right to Farm laws. The State's Right to Farm laws apply generally to large farming businesses and specifically farms of two acres or more in size.

Aren't the State laws enough?

No. We must keep in mind that the number of farms in Town has decreased dramatically over the past sixty years. Therefore at the local level, a general bylaw that encompasses farms of all sizes seems necessary at this time. Local Right to Farm laws show that farming is a valued and accepted activity in the community.

How does the bylaw benefit farms?

Today as in the past, Mattapoissett is perfectly suited to farming and agricultural businesses. Many of us remember fondly certain large farms in Mattapoissett that no longer exist. In the past, farms have gone out of business for a multitude of reasons. In these times, if people are given the right to farm on smaller parcels of land, farming in the community can continue with the small business farmer along with the large farms that are left. The economic benefits to this community when small businesses are encouraged to thrive are potentially enormous, not just to the farmer but to the community as a whole.

What else does the bylaw provide?

From time to time, farmers and neighbors may have conflicts and these must be addressed and resolved in a fair and consistent manner. Residents adjacent to farms have a number of recourses for dealing with issues they encounter with their neighboring farmer. The Agricultural Commission is involved in the voluntary mediation process, but makes no regulatory decisions; it simply makes recommendations to all parties involved.

Mediation is a process of education. The value behind voluntary mediation is that every effort can be made to resolve differences between neighbors and farmers before problems escalate. If a resident is unsatisfied with the result or if an agreement cannot be reached, complaints can continue through existing channels with the applicable town official(s) or board.

As in the past, any person concerned about the operation of a farm may file a complaint with the Select Board, Zoning Enforcement Officer (ZEO) or Board of Health, depending upon the nature of the complaint. (The Board of Health regulates all animal and public health issues.) The town body may then ask the Agricultural Commission for help.

The mediation process is voluntary and is an attempt to educate all parties involved, neighbor and farmer alike, as to the nature of active farming and the rights of residents or the abutting neighbor. Even with the implementation of this new bylaw, the Board of Health, building, and wetland regulations still apply and will be enforced.

Support a long- standing and proud tradition in Mattapoissett of active farms. Continue to support what the Town has repeatedly said we believe to be of importance to our community- local agriculture in Mattapoissett.

Thank you for your support!

The Mattapoissett Agricultural Commission:

Bob Spooner, Chairman

Jess Collyer, Secretary

Dottie Nunes, Mike Dubuc, Mike King, Shiloah Major, Gerald Randall

Associate Member(s): Pierce Randall, Chapman Dickerson