



STATE OF CONNECTICUT – COUNTY OF TOLLAND
INCORPORATED 1786

TOWN OF ELLINGTON

55 MAIN STREET – PO BOX 187
ELLINGTON, CONNECTICUT 06029-0187
www.ellington-ct.gov

TEL. (860) 870-3120

TOWN PLANNER'S OFFICE

FAX (860) 870-3122

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION REGULAR MEETING AGENDA

WEDNESDAY, MAY 8, 2024, 7:00 PM

IN-PERSON ATTENDANCE: TOWN HALL ANNEX, 57 MAIN STREET, ELLINGTON, CT

REMOTE ATTENDANCE: VIA ZOOM MEETING, INSTRUCTIONS PROVIDED BELOW

I. CALL TO ORDER:

II. PUBLIC COMMENTS (on non-agenda items):

III. ACTIVE BUSINESS:

1. Tax Incentive/Abatement Programs –
 - a. Review of Draft Ordinance Pursuant to CGS §12-81m - Municipal Option to Abate up to 50% of Property Tax for Farming Operations.
2. Report: Tolland County Chamber of Commerce
3. Agricultural Initiatives
4. CEDAS Best Practices – Customer Service Satisfaction Survey Results
5. Report: Current Economic Activity

IV. ADMINISTRATIVE BUSINESS:

1. Fiscal Year 2023-2024 Budget & Expenditures Update.
2. Approval of the April 10, 2024, Regular Meeting Minutes.
3. Correspondence/Discussion:
 - a. The Patch article - Ellington Dairy Farm Getting Long-Term Climate Resiliency Grant, dated April 17, 2024.

V. ADJOURNMENT:

Next regular meeting is scheduled for June 12, 2024.

Instructions to attend meeting remotely via Zoom Meeting listed below. The agenda is posted on the Town of Ellington webpage (www.ellington-ct.gov) under Agenda & Minutes, Economic Development Commission.

Join Zoom Meeting via link:

Link: <https://us06web.zoom.us/j/84055768556>

Meeting ID: 840 5576 8556

Passcode: 340434

Join Zoom Meeting by phone:

1-646-558-8656 US (New York)

Meeting ID: 840 5576 8556

Passcode: 340434

COMMISSIONERS: TO ASSIST IN ESTABLISHING QUORUMS REQUIRED TO CONDUCT MEETINGS, PLEASE CONTACT THE PLANNING DEPARTMENT IF YOU ARE UNABLE TO ATTEND A SCHEDULED MEETING.

Chapter ----
PROPERTY TAX ABATEMENT FOR FARMS

- | | |
|---|------------------------|
| § -1. Purpose. | § -5. Notification. |
| § -2. Legislative Authority. | § -6. Recapture. |
| § -3. Eligible Farms. | § -7. Right to Appeal. |
| § -4. Property Tax Abatement Application. | |

[HISTORY: Adopted by the Town of Ellington _____, effective _____.]

§ -1. Purpose. Agriculture is a significant part of Ellington's heritage and is essential to the quality of life, environment, and local economy. The purpose of this ordinance is to promote agricultural operations in Ellington and establish a program whereby tax relief may be granted to eligible farms.

§ -2. Legislative Authority. This ordinance was enacted pursuant to Sections 7-148 and 12-81m of the Connecticut General Statutes.

§ -3. Eligible Farms. The following farms may be eligible for property tax abatement: dairy farms, fruit orchards, vegetable farms, nursery farms, vineyards for growing of grapes for wine, tobacco farms, or any farm which employs nontraditional farming methods, including, but not limited to, hydroponics.

§ -4. Property Tax Abatement Application. The Town Assessor may abate fifty percent (50%) of the property tax for eligible farms after review of an abatement application in accordance with the following.

- a. A request for a farm abatement must be made by application to the Town Assessor by the record owner of the property.
- b. Application must be submitted no later than October 1, for the upcoming grand list year. An applicant must provide the Town Assessor with evidence to support the status of the property as an eligible farm and a notarized affidavit certifying that the applicant derived at least fifteen thousand dollars in gross sales or incurred at least fifteen thousand dollars in expenses from the eligible farm with respect to the most recently completed tax year. An eligible farm shall cumulatively include a minimum of twenty (20) acres of farmland upon which an individual entity owns and is doing business as an eligible farm, otherwise such abatement application shall be denied.
- c. In determining whether a property is an eligible farm, the Town Assessor shall take into account, among other factors: the acreage of properties, the number and types of livestock, vegetable production, fruit trees, nursery crops, the quantity of milk sold by the facility, the gross income of the farm derived from dairy, fruit, vegetable, nursery, vineyards for growing of grapes for wine, tobacco, or from other types of eligible farm related activities; and, in the case of a dairy farm, evidence of Dairy Farm or Milk Producing Permit or Dairy Plant or Milk Dealer Permit, as provided by Connecticut General Statutes Section 22-173.

- d. All residences for farm homesteads and buildings used for housing for seasonal workers shall be excluded.
- e. An abatement shall be effective for one year, or until such time as the eligible farm is sold or farming operations cease and upon determination by the Town Assessor that the abatement beneficiary has failed to show that they derived at least fifteen thousand dollars in gross sales or incurred at least fifteen thousand dollars in expenses related to the eligible farm with respect to the most recently completed tax year.

§ -5. Notification. The eligible farm receiving the abatement must notify the Town Assessor in writing within thirty (30) days of the sale of any property granted abatement pursuant to the ordinance or the cessation of eligible farming operations.

§ -6. Recapture. Upon sale of the property or cessation of eligible farming operations, the property owner must pay to the Town a percentage of the original amount of the taxes abated, pursuant to the following schedule:

If an eligible farm is sold or farming operations cease for a property that received abatement prior to ten (10) years from the initial abatement, the abatement beneficiary shall pay the Town a percentage of the original amount of taxes abated pursuant to the following schedule.

Between 1 day and 365 days.....	100%
Between 1 year 1 day and 2 years	90%
Between 2 years 1 day and 3 years	80%
Between 3 years 1 day and 4 years	70%
Between 4 years 1 day and 5 years	60%
Between 5 years 1 day and 6 years	50%
Between 6 years 1 day and 7 years	40%
Between 7 years 1 day and 8 years	30%
Between 8 years 1 day and 9 years	20%
Between 9 years 1 day and 10 years	10%
More than 10 years	0%

- a. Upon affirmative vote by the Board of Selectmen, the Town Assessor may waive any of the amounts which would otherwise be owed pursuant to the foregoing recapture provision if after the sale of the property the property continues to be used as an “eligible farm,” “forest land,” or “open space,” as defined in Section 12-107b of the Connecticut General Statutes.
- b. The taxes owed to the Town of Ellington pursuant to the recapture provisions of this chapter shall be due and payable by the abatement beneficiary to the Town of Ellington at the time of recording of the deed or other instrument of conveyance. Any recapture payment received by the Town shall become part of the general revenue of the Town of Ellington. No deed or other instrument of conveyance which is subject to the recapture of tax abatement, as set forth herein, shall be recorded by the Town Clerk unless the funds due under the recapture provision have been paid, or the obligation has been waived by the Board of Selectmen.

- c. The Town Assessor shall file, not later than 60 days after abatement is approved, with the Town Clerk, a certificate for any such dairy farm, fruit orchard, vegetable farm, nursery farm, vineyard for growing of grapes for wine, tobacco farm, or any farm which employs nontraditional farming methods, including, but not limited to, hydroponics, setting forth the date of initial abatement and the obligation to pay the recapture funds as set forth herein. Said certificate shall be recorded in the land records of the Town of Ellington.

§ -7. Right of Appeal. Any person claiming to be aggrieved by any action or inaction of the Town Assessor regarding this ordinance may appeal to the Board of Assessment Appeals in the manner set forth in Connecticut General Statutes Section 12-111, as amended. Appeals from any decision of the Board of Assessment Appeals may be taken to the Superior Court for the Judicial District of Tolland pursuant to Connecticut General Statutes Section 12-117a, as amended.

Town of Ellington

General Ledger - On Demand Report

Fiscal Year: 2023-2024 From Date: 7/1/2023 To Date: 4/30/2024

Account Mask: ?????00220???????

Account Type: All Print Detail Include PreEncumbrance

Print accounts with zero balance Include Inactive Accounts Filter Encumbrance Detail by Date Range Budget Balance

Account Number / Description	Budget	Range To Date	YTD	Balance	Encumbrance	% Remaining Bud
1000.02.00220.10.50103	\$1,600.00	\$910.00	\$910.00	\$690.00	\$0.00	43.13%
Part Time---Econ Devet Commission--						

1000.02.00220.20.60221	\$1,000.00	(\$125.00)	(\$125.00)	\$1,125.00	\$0.00	112.50%
Advertising Printing---Econ Devet Commission--						

1000.02.00220.20.60222	\$750.00	\$750.00	\$750.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	0.00%
Dues & Subscriptions---Econ Devet Commission--						

1000.02.00220.20.60223	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	0.00%
Travel---Econ Devet Commission--						

1000.02.00220.20.60232	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	0.00%
Postage---Econ Devet Commission--						

1000.02.00220.20.60233	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	0.00%
Education---Econ Devet Commission--						

1000.02.00220.20.60234	\$100.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$100.00	\$0.00	100.00%
Professional Development---Econ Devet Commission--						

1000.02.00220.20.60250	\$1,500.00	\$313.00	\$313.00	\$1,187.00	\$0.00	79.13%
Contracted Services---Econ Devet Commission--						

1000.02.00220.30.60341	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	0.00%
Office Supplies---Econ Devet Commission--						

Fund: 1000 \$4,950.00 \$1,848.00 \$1,848.00 \$3,102.00 \$0.00 \$3,102.00

Town of Ellington

General Ledger - On Demand Report

Account Mask: ??????00220???????

Print accounts with zero balance

Include Inactive Accounts

Filter Encumbrance Detail by Date Range

Print Detail Include PreEncumbrance

Account Number / Description

Budget	Range To Date	YTD	Balance	Encumbrance	% Remaining Bud
\$4,950.00	\$1,848.00	\$1,848.00	\$3,102.00	\$0.00	\$3,102.00

Grand Total:

End of Report



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ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION REGULAR MEETING MINUTES

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 10, 2024, 7:00 PM

IN-PERSON ATTENDANCE: TOWN HALL ANNEX, 57 MAIN STREET, ELLINGTON, CT

REMOTE ATTENDANCE: VIA ZOOM MEETING

PRESENT: In Person: Chairman Sean Kelly, Regular Member Cynthia Soto, and Alternate Amos Smith (arrived at 7:13 PM)

Remote Attendance: Vice Chairman Donna Resutec, and Regular Members David Hurley and Chris Todd (arrived at 7:19 PM)

ABSENT: Alternates Michael Swanson and Sam Chang

STAFF

PRESENT: Lisa M. Houlihan, Town Planner and Nathaniel Trask, Recording Clerk

OTHERS

PRESENT: Seth Bahler and Arlo Hoffman, Oakridge Dairy, LLC.; John Rainaldi, Tax Assessor

I. CALL TO ORDER: Chairman Sean Kelly called the meeting to order at 7:01 PM.

II. PUBLIC COMMENTS (on non-agenda items): None

III. ACTIVE BUSINESS:

1. Tax Incentive/Abatement Programs

- a. Review of Tax Abatement Application from Oakridge Dairy, LLC, to convert a pole barn to a 14,000 square foot bottling facility and new machinery, equipment and motor vehicles at 80 Meadow Brook Road, APN 090-017-0000, in the Rural Agricultural Residential (RAR) Zone.

Seth Bahler, manager of Oakridge Dairy, LLC., addressed the commission. Oakridge Dairy is building a bottling plant to bottle a portion of their milk in glass bottles. Currently, they bring their milk to a farm in Bolton to bottle it and bring it back to Ellington to distribute it through their Modern Milkman delivery service. They are looking to convert the cow barn at 80 Meadowbrook Road into a bottling plant and storage facility for the Modern Milkman. Seth said they currently bottle 2-3% of their milk in their own bottles and are looking to increase that percentage over the next couple of years. He said they hope to expand to other products, but currently the plant would support the Modern Milkman service.

Chairman Kelly said he was unsure if this would qualify for the abatement program since the abatement program is for new construction, however renovating and repurposing a building is considered new construction and expansion of an existing business. Under these conditions, the project would qualify for abatement. The structure would be taxed on the new value at the same rate, and the abatement would apply to the investment. Commissioner Hurley asked if the equipment is taxed as property tax. Chairman Kelly said the equipment would not be a part of the abatement but would be taxed as a part of the investment. John Rainaldi, the Tax Assessor, said he did not think the equipment would qualify for the farming

exemption since it would not be being used for farming practice, but probably would qualify for the manufacturing exemption. Seth said they have been adding at least one employee every other week to their Modern Milkman business, and they would be looking to add a minimum of 15 new employees with the building of the bottling plant.

Chairman Kelly said this abatement would support the town's efforts to protect and preserve open space and agriculture, support a local business that's investing in the town, and support providing a service to the townspeople. Commissioner Hurley said that it adds to the tax base. Vice Chairman Resutek said "this sounds like a grand example" of utilizing the abatement policy.

The motion will need to be passed by the Board of Selectmen before it goes to a town meeting. The motion will need to be passed at a town meeting before taking effect.

MOVED (KELLY), SECONDED (SOTO) AND PASSED UNANIMOUSLY TO FIND OAKRIDGE DAIRY, LLC, AN ELIGIBLE FARM AND THE RECONSTRUCTION OF A POLE BARN TO A 14,000 SQUARE FOOT MODERN BOTTLING DISTRIBUTION FACILITY AND THE ADDITION OF UP TO FIFTEEN (15) NEW EMPLOYEES TO MEET THE PURPOSE OF THE ABATEMENT PROGRAM BY ENCOURAGING GROWTH AND INVESTMENT IN FARMING OPERATIONS THAT WILL INCREASE LONG TERM TAX REVENUE AND FURTHER FIND THE ABATEMENT APPLICATION TO MEET THE OUTCOME OF THE PROGRAM BY HELPING SUSTAIN FARMING OPERATIONS IN TOWN AND PROVIDING POTENTIAL EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES FOR RESIDENTS. THE ABATEMENT SHALL BE A 50% ABATEMENT OVER THE 7-YEAR MAXIMUM TERM.

- b. Tax Incentive/Abatement Programs – Discuss CGS §12-81m Municipal Option to Abate up to 50% of Property Tax for Farming Operations.

To qualify for the abatement, the farm needs to have a minimum total of 20 acres and the abatement can only apply to buildings used for agricultural purposes. An analysis of existing farm operations in town determined the only agricultural operation that qualifies for the potential new program is Oakridge Dairy, LLC. Chairman Kelly said what they were looking to do was to "thread a needle" and do something that benefits Oakridge Dairy, LLC, while not having an impact on other Ellington taxpayers. Lisa Houlihan, Town Planner, asked if the draft should say that an abatement can be up to 50% or would be just 50%. The commission agreed it would be simpler to make the abatement just 50%. Arlo Hoffman, Oakridge Dairy, LLC, asked if this mirrored what other towns have done, and Lisa replied affirmatively. She added that both the Board of Selectmen and the Board of Finance would need to support the new program for it to be adopted.

Lisa said what she was looking for was to see if the commission wanted her to draft a potential new abatement program that she would review with the commission next month.

BY CONSENSUS, THE COMMISSION AUTHORIZED THE TOWN PLANNER TO DRAFT A POTENTIAL NEW ABATEMENT PROGRAM PURSUANT TO CGS §12-81M FOR REVIEW AT THE NEXT MEETING ON MAY 8, 2024.

2. Report: Tolland County Chamber of Commerce

Nothing new to report currently.

3. Agricultural Initiatives

- a. Discuss Farmer Resources Informational Event held February 27, 2024, Town Hall Annex.

Lisa said she helped the Connecticut Farm Bureau organize the event and reached out to local farmers who might have been interested. She said the room was packed and participants learned a lot about the help they could get with starting and preserving farms and establishing healthy soils. There was also information on available grant programs. A landing page was created with the information on the Conservation Commission's webpage on the town's website.

4. Review Economic Development Sections from the 2023 Sustainable Connecticut Certification Action Overview Worksheet.

- a. Section 2.3 Inventory and Promote Local Products and Services.

Lisa said the Sustainable CT working group created a business list that qualified for credit for this section. The business list does not include home-based businesses but does include ones that have storefronts. She provided the commission with a copy of the list and noted it's available on the commission's webpage on the town's website.

- b. Section 2.4 Provide Resources and Supports to Local Businesses.

Lisa said the annual Shop Ellington campaign met this action.

The working group submitted their application for Sustainable CT bronze certification on April 3, 2024, and certification lasts for three years. Lisa asked if the commission wanted to remove this item from future agendas.

MOVED (SMITH), SECONDED (TODD) AND PASSED UNANIMOUSLY TO REMOVE THE REVIEW OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT SECTIONS FROM THE 2023 SUSTAINABLE CONNECTICUT CERTIFICATION ACTION OVERVIEW WORKSHEET FROM FUTURE AGENDAS.

5. CEDAS Best Practices – Customer Service Satisfaction Survey Results

No surveys have been collected since the last meeting. Lisa added that there is a lot of activity going on, but many interactions include employees from other departments, and they may only collect surveys for assistance solely by Planning Department staff.

6. Report: Current Economic Activity

There is a self-storage facility being built on West Road. There will be a gate that opens and closes and will have limited hours.

The Planning and Zoning Commission approved 94,500 sq. ft. of construction on a parcel south of Country Pure Foods on West Road. The three buildings will be owned by the owners of The Barn Yard and will be used as contractor rental space. Chairman Kelly said the spaces would likely be used as a place of operations for contractors, such as a painter who can't operate his business out of his home.

IV. ADMINISTRATIVE BUSINESS:

1. Fiscal Year 2023-2024 Budget & Expenditures Update.

Nothing new to report currently.

2. Approval of the January 10, 2024, Regular Meeting Minutes.

MOVED (RESUTEK) SECONDED (TODD) AND PASSED UNANIMOUSLY TO APPROVE THE JANUARY 10, 2024, REGULAR MEETING MINUTES AS WRITTEN.

3. Correspondence/Discussion:

- a. February 5, 2024, letter from the CT Siting Council for Petition 1589 for a 3MW solar facility at 360 Somers Road, vote to issue declaratory ruling failed.

The CT Siting Council voted on Petition 1589 for a 3MW solar facility at 360 Somers Road failed. There was a majority vote that was needed to pass, however the vote ended in a tie. There was significant concern about the safety of skydivers landing in the area, which was the primary reason the vote failed.

Vice Chairman Resutek asked how many solar farms have been approved in Ellington. Chairman Kelly said there is the one between Route 140 and Reeves Road and one on Middle Road. She also asked if there is a list of the solar farms that have been approved by the CT Siting Council, stating an understanding that there are more solar farms east of the Connecticut River. Lisa said the CT Siting Council's website lists the solar farm applications they have approved and pending applications. Commissioner Hurley said that there could be more solar farms to the east of the river due to the terrain being flatter than the western side. He added that there seems to be a general agreement not to cut forests for solar farms.

Vice Chairman Resutek said there is pushback on constructing more solar farms in East Windsor since they seem to have a lot already. Currently the CT Siting Council has full authority over approving applications for solar installations. The CT Siting Council can receive input from public comments and town leadership, but still retain complete authority. Chairman Kelly said that issue must be solved legislatively. Commissioner Hurley stated that Connecticut is generally in favor of sustainable practices like waste management and green energy but would rather see other states contribute to fulfilling those objectives too. He added that space otherwise used for solar installations could be used to address another issue in the state: a shortage of housing.

- b. January 28, 2024, Hartford Courant article for Oakridge Dairy "We want to be the farm of the future".

A Hartford Courant article about Oakridge Dairy, LLC, was given to commissioners. Chairman Kelly lauded the piece and said it reinforces the town's identity. He added that Oakridge Dairy, LLC, has close to 4,000 cows and is the largest dairy farm in Connecticut.

V. ADJOURNMENT:


MOVED (HURLEY) SECONDED (RESUTEK) AND PASSED UNANIMOUSLY TO ADJOURN THE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION MEETING AT 7:55 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Nathaniel Trask, Recording Clerk

Ellington Dairy Farm Getting Long-Term Climate Resiliency Grant

The farm has been awarded \$100,000 by the Connecticut Department of Agriculture.

 Tim Jensen, Patch Staff

Posted Wed, Apr 17, 2024 at 2:55 pm ET



A dairy farm in Ellington has been awarded a \$100,000 grant by the Connecticut Department of Agriculture. (Chris Dehnel/Patch)

ELLINGTON, CT — A prominent Ellington dairy farm is one of 20 recipients who will share \$1.475 million in state funding to farmers and non-profits involved in production agriculture, to invest in long-term climate resiliency projects which will decrease vulnerability to extreme weather events through regenerative agricultural practices.

Oakridge Dairy LLC has been awarded \$100,000 by the Connecticut Department of Agriculture (CT DoAg), to be used for soil health and organic matter biodiversity, water management, capital improvements and purchases, according to Agriculture Commissioner Bryan P. Hurlburt.

The CT DoAg is funding the projects as part of the Farmland Restoration, Climate Resiliency and Preparedness Grant, which was authorized by and funded through Connecticut General Statutes 22-6c with a focus on restoring and improving land with prime and important farmland soils.

"Connecticut's agricultural producers have demonstrated a strong desire to implement sustainable farming practices to be part of the climate change solution while also mitigating the impacts of more extreme weather events," Hurlburt said in a written statement. "Through these strategic investments, farmers will be able to conduct projects to improve soils for increased productivity and enhanced resilience."

State Sen. Saud Anwar said, "It's encouraging to know Ellington's Oakridge Dairy is making investments to improve its resources and prepare for tomorrow, and I'm grateful to state leaders for including our community in its support." Funds can be used for capital investments, including equipment, to implement farming practices that will have a multi-year or cumulative effect on the climate resiliency of the land or farming operation. CT DoAg received 66 eligible grant applications requesting up to \$4.8 million in funding. Of the 20 awards, 13 were directed towards beginning/underserved producers and 5 to BIPOC producers.

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Awardees will be provided technical assistance by a soil scientist or other advisor assigned by and paid for by CT DoAg in the development of their Farmland Restoration and Climate Resiliency Plan (FRCF Plan).

Who Has the Cheapest Car
Insurance in Connecticut
(Check Zip Code)

Scientists: Brain Scan
Uncovers the Real Root
Cause of Tinnitus (Ear
Ringing)
Nourish It

Put a Toilet Paper Roll
Under the Toilet Seat at
Night if Alone, Here's Why
Life Hack Guru