

The following is a proposal to draft a Warrant Article to establish a Lee Agricultural Commission at the 2008 Lee Town Meeting.

Background: In 2005, Governor John Lynch appointed a Farm Viability Task Force to “study and recommend policy and actions which would promote the strength and vitality of the state’s agricultural sector, in recognition of its role in the state’s food system, economy, and environment”. In a summary report, the Task Force recommended 10 key public policy issues and actions that New Hampshire needs to address immediately to help local agriculture thrive and prosper over the next decade while sustaining its potential productivity for future generations.

One of the 10 key actions was to create enabling legislation which would allow local governments to establish Agricultural Commissions. These commissions would not have regulatory or enforcement powers, but would advise municipalities about ways to positively address agricultural issues and strengthen the vitality and sustainability of local agriculture. Enabling legislation co-sponsored by some of our own legislators including Rep. Naida Kaen, Rep. Janet Wall, Rep. Judith Spang and Senator Jackie Cilley became law in August 2007 (see House Bill 293 as amended, final version) and was patterned after enabling legislation for the establishment of Heritage Commissions.

In the Agriculture Section of the Town Of Lee Master Plan, 2006 to 2015, a primary recognition is that our natural resource base and our rural agricultural heritage are integral to the character of the town and that the future viability and sustainability of a working landscape will be determined largely by the wise use of these resources. To this end, a primary action item as stated in the Master Plan is to establish a permanent Agricultural Commission with advisory and review authority and other duties to assist in the implementation of the goals and objectives of the Master Plan.

In anticipation of the passage of enabling legislation, the town of Lee Board of Selectmen appointed a temporary Agriculture Committee in mid 2007 to recommend ways to begin the implementation. This very timely and visionary move has been a model for many other towns throughout the state wishing to follow our lead.

Proposed action: For the Town of Lee, N.H. Board of Selectmen to endorse and submit a proposed Warrant Article for vote at the 2008 Lee N.H. Town Meeting to establish a Lee Agricultural Commission including the following:

In addition to establishing a Lee Agricultural Commission, pursuant to RSA 674:44-e through g; RSA 673: 1, II; RSA 673: 4-b; RSA 673:7 II, 10, 14 I, 18, 20, and 21, there are two other proposed actions as stated below:

1. under the membership section 673:4-b I, prescribed manner of appointment, it is proposed that the governing body of the town (Selectmen) shall appoint 7 regular members and 5 alternate members to the Lee Agricultural Commission. Whenever possible, the majority of both Regular and Alternate members shall be or shall have been actively engaged in agricultural pursuits. Upon passage of this warrant article, current regular and alternate members of the Lee Agriculture Committee shall automatically be nominated to the new Lee Agricultural Commission to serve the remainder of their existing terms. Subsequently, all new members shall be selected from a list of nominees provided to the governing body by the existing Lee Agricultural Commission.

2. upon the passage of this warrant article, any outstanding balance remaining in the existing Lee Agriculture Committee funds shall be automatically transferred to the new Lee Agricultural Commission as authorized and pursuant to RSA 674-44g (Appropriations Authorized).

Dec. 2007