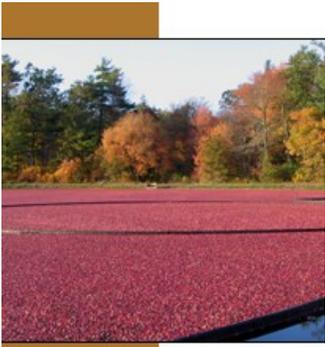


AgComs: History

Since Colonial times, Massachusetts has held fast to its cherished legacy as an agricultural state. This traditional image has paled in the minds of many, however, with ever-increasing commercial and residential development. In recent years, farmers feeling the pressures of this development, higher production costs, and a shrinking portion of the consumer dollar have sold their farms



Rochester in Autumn

or instituted changes of their own to make the farm more viable. The state's strong economy and proximity to large population centers exerts pressure to develop farmland for alternative uses."

Agriculture once had a strong voice in municipal government. Over time, agriculture's voice in local government and visibility in the community has diminished.

Recently, farmland preservation, agricultural economic development, rural character and open space retention have emerged as high priorities in communities throughout the Commonwealth.

Farmers, municipal officials, and residents have recognized that by organizing an Agricultural Commission a voice is returned to farmers within government.

YOUR AgCom

This commission was appointed by the Rochester Select Board to represent the farming community and can only succeed in its mission, if it receives input from farmers.

Meetings, which are open to all, are held monthly on the 3rd Thursday at 6 pm in the town hall.

Questions, and suggestions may be directed to the contacts below.

Rochester Agricultural Commission
One Constitution Way
Rochester, MA 02770

Phone: (508) 245-0953
E-mail: rochesteragcom@gmail.com



Rochester Agricultural Commission (AgCom)

Advocating for
Farmers

Rochester Agricultural Commission (AgCom)

What is an Agricultural Commission (AgCom)?

A town agricultural commission (AgCom) is a standing committee of town government, created through a vote of Town Meeting and appointed by the Board of Selectmen or governing body of the town. AgComs represent the farming community, encourage the pursuit of agriculture, promote agricultural economic development and protect farmlands and farm businesses, and preserve, revitalize and sustain agricultural businesses and land. In some communities they focus on farmland preservation efforts, while in others they review regulatory proposals developed by other town boards



A Rochester Tradition

(planning board, board of health, conservation commission, etc), or provide marketing coordination to assist all farms in town. Others have played key roles in resolving farmer/neighbor disputes, or simply providing referrals for farmers needing better information. By working within town government through an AgCom, farmers enhance their credibility, and are viewed as part of the problem-solving team.

What does an AgCom do?

- Serves as a local voice advocating for farmers, farm businesses and farm interests
- Provides visibility for farming
- Works with other town boards about issues facing the town that affect agriculture
- Helps resolve farm related problems or conflicts
- Protects farmland and natural resources

Why are town AgComs formed?

Many towns trying to balance growth and quality of life issues are creating AgComs. The intent of an AgCom is simple: protect agricultural lands, preserve rural character, provide a voice for farmers, and encourage agricultural based businesses.

Who can serve on an AgCom?

Anyone who is a resident of the town is eligible to sit on a town board or commission. However, the by-law created and passed by Rochester determined the composition of the commission to be 7 members, at least 4 of them farmers.

Does an AgCom cost the town money?

Other towns' AgCom budgets range from \$0 to \$1,000 per year. Rochester has not set one yet.

Are AgComs regulatory?

Unlike some other town committees, AgComs do not operate under any regulatory authority from the Commonwealth. While town conservation commissions implement the State Wetlands Protection Act and planning boards enforce the local zoning code, AgComs are created at Town Meeting to represent farming interests in the town-but they do not have any legal mandate or enforcement authority.

What are AgComs doing in Massachusetts?

- Adopting local right-to-farm by-laws
- Raising monies for farmland protection and economic development
- Starting local farmer's markets
- Providing conflict resolution on farm related disputes within town
- Collaborating with other town boards on development proposals
- Educating town residents about the value of agriculture in the community
- Holding educational workshops on intergenerational transfer of property, Chapter 61 lands, farm viability, and Agricultural Preservation Restrictions