

**TOWN OF CROMWELL
CONSERVATION COMMISSION**

FARMLAND PRESERVATION COMMITTEE

***SPECIAL MEETING
9:00 A.M. SUNDAY, MAY 16, 2010
STARTING AT 95 BERLIN ROAD
CROMWELL, CT***

MINUTES

Present: Scott Lamberson, John Whitney, Joseph Corlis, Sairah Sandhu and Alternate
Jonathan Pinney.
Absent: Ernest Pandolfe.

1. Call to Order:

Chairman Scott Lamberson called the meeting to order at 9:10 am.

2. Roll Call and Seating of Alternates:

The presence of the above members was noted. John Whitney made a motion to seat Jonathan Pinney, seconded by Joe Corlis. *All were in favor.*

3. Farm Visits:

a. 95 Berlin Road ("Smigel Farm"):

Evelyn Smigel took the committee on a tour of her property. She said the Smigel family has been farming these 14 acres since 1924.

She took the members into the one remaining active greenhouse (the remains of several other greenhouses and an abandoned showroom are on the premises) containing flats of vegetables, ornamental grasses, and flowers for retail sale to established customers; a small area where she is growing peas and onions now, and later this year will plant corn and then pumpkins; and two small barns. She has no employees but a few family members who do not live in Cromwell anymore occasionally help her. Her husband has had very severe health problems and is not able to work at all.

A large portion of the rear of the property used to be planted years ago, before the Mattabasset Sewer trunk line was installed which acts as a berm, trapping runoff and making the area unusable for farming. They were compensated at the time in the amount of several thousand dollars.

Mrs. Smigel said that their tax burden, which was always high, recently got worse when the Tax Assessor revoked their farming assessment because they put the property on the market.

b. 604 Main Street ("Millane Nurseries")

The Committee then went to Millane Nurseries. Michael Millane met them at the office and told them that Millane Nurseries has been in business since 1923 and that their market area includes eastern New York state, Connecticut, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, southern Maine and southern New Hampshire. They have about 50 acres on Main Street and 110 acres on Field Road, plus other land elsewhere in Connecticut as well as land that they lease from others. They employ 120 people during the peak of the season, going down to 10 or fewer in the winter. Mr. Millane showed the committee members several parcel maps of Cromwell showing the decline in farming over the years. Millane Nurseries hosted an "Arbor Day Tree Nursery Tour" for Cromwell school kids last year which was well-received and televised.

He then took the committee by van on a tour of the Millane property on Main Street, and the property on Field Road where he showed some of the 600 kinds of trees and shrubs that Millane grows. They do lease some land to grow trees, with a minimum lease of five years.

He told the committee that while the land Millane owns may be very valuable, the amount of debt is in the millions of dollars. Unless they can find a way to deal with this debt, they will be out of business. One way would be to sell some of the Field Road sand and remove it by rail (the railroad tracks run through the property) so as not to impact local traffic or neighbors. However when he presented the idea to "Save the Neighborhood", the group said they were opposed to it.

4. Adjourn:

John Whitney made a motion to adjourn, seconded by Joe Corlis. All were in favor. *The Meeting adjourned at 11:05 pm.*

Respectfully submitted,

Craig Minor, AICP
Town PI