



CONNECTICUT DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

450 Columbus Blvd, Suite 701 | Hartford, Connecticut 06103 | 860.713.2500
Office of the Commissioner
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Connecticut Department of Agriculture Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Working Group Access to Secure Land Tenure

Regular Meeting Minutes
Monday, June 27, 2022
11:00AM-12:00PM

Was held virtually

Meeting Recording Here: [Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion - Dropbox](#)

Members Present: Latha Swamy, Anwar Ahmad, Zania Johnson, Richard Myers, Ashley Stallworth

Members Absent: Dominick Grant, Shawn Sims, Chelsea Gazillo,

Public Present: None

DoAg Staff: Holly Lalime, Cyrena Thibodeau

1. **Welcome and Call to Order-** Meeting was called to order by Latha Swamy at 11:10AM
2. **New Business:** Discussing urban and peri-urban working lands
 - There are two approaches to this subject
 1. Is the group interested in looking at developing policies and other changes to legislation that we can focus on? (Big picture stuff/a systems approach)
 2. What are the gaps in supportive programming? What policies could support programming and financial support?
 - Where are each of these areas getting their direct funding source? This could help decide which direction to go and to hold authorities accountable.
 - Group decided to go with the first approach.
 - **Urban Ag Master Plans – Latha gave an overview of the urban ag master plan project in New Haven**
 - The city of New Haven has a Director of Food Policy (Latha Swamy), but their division had no funding. Latha applied for a grant to tackle issues like food sovereignty and resilience. This funding allowed for the development of an Urban Ag Master Plan. The focus is to engage with folks who currently



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aren't being served/and or involved. The plan should be actionable. The plan should last beyond the current writers. Needs to have policy change built into it. Co-developing policy bundles into the plan. A three-year process. Extensive outreach plan to gather applications for the community advisory board (comprised of 60 members). Shifting a city's focus to ag and food policy issues will be an uphill battle – this is the opinion on food policy directors across the country. Urban Ag in many localities serve as an opportunity for gentrification. Need to support urban ag in a way that does not allow for the displacement of communities. * **Potential**

Recommendation – strongly suggest that urban ag master plans be required for all municipalities with a population of a certain amount. *

- Ashley – growing concern – how do we get state officials to follow through on promises? How do you get officials to see that taxpayer resources should be funding these types of projects?
- Richard – need to show not a return on investment but a return on environment.
- Latha – the federal/state government are just starting to focus on urban agriculture. It's not out of the running to suggest as a group specific funding for urban agriculture. There are currently grant programs that are accessible to urban growers. Grant information needs to be more accessible. The approaches and results of urban ag master plans will look different in each municipality. Plans should come with an implementation grant.
- **Public Act 490 - (Connecticut General Statutes Sections 12-107a through 107-f)**
 - Holly gave a short overview of PA490. It is a land use law that allows forest, farm, and open space land to be assess at its use value rather than its fair market or highest and best use value. Decisions about PA490 are at the discretion of each municipality's assessor. There are not uniform/statewide guidelines for eligibility.
 - * **Potential Recommendation – pursue a more uniform application of PA 490 throughout all municipalities in CT with specific parameters for its application in urban areas. ***
- **Educational Resources**
 - Ag related educational resources are typically available through state funded universities.
 - * **Potential Recommendation – provide a system where community members can recommend what educational resources are available and who provides them and where. ***



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- New Haven is using a specialty crop block grant to do just that.

3. Links:

- <https://portal.ct.gov/DOAG/ADaRC/ADaRC/Urban-Agriculture-in-Connecticut>
- <https://sites.google.com/view/phillyagplan/home>
- <https://portal.ct.gov/DOAG/Commissioner/Commissioner/Public-Act-490---The-Basics>
- <https://portal.ct.gov/doag/adarc/publications/specialty-crop-block-grant>

4. Public Comment- No public comment.

5. Adjourn- Meeting was adjourned at 12:02 PM by Latha Swamy. Respectfully submitted, Holly Lalime, Env. Analyst, June 30, 2022.