

## **‘PLANNING FOR AGRICULTURE IN CT’ WEBINAR**

**Date: June 10<sup>th</sup>, 2016**

**Time: 1 pm – 2:30 pm**

Sponsors: CCAPA and American Farmland Trust

Program Description: Agriculture is a diverse, dynamic and vital land use in Connecticut that provides countless economic and environmental benefits to a community. This session will provide planners and town governments the tools and resources to plan for the future of agriculture and help create a supportive community atmosphere in which agriculture can thrive. The session will: 1) address the status of agriculture and challenges farmers face in CT; 2) discuss major issues facing agriculture related to land use and planning; 3) describe planners efforts to foster a thriving agricultural sector; 4) discuss state and federal programs to protect farmland and manage it sustainably; and 6) offer specific planner ‘take-aways’ from the webinar.

The program attendees will also receive copies of the newly-revised educational guide, ‘Planning for Agriculture: A Guide for Connecticut Municipalities’. This comprehensive booklet covers topics including the benefits of farms, planning and zoning tools, right-to-farm ordinances, subdivision regulations, financing local farmland protection, promoting local farm viability, and addressing common farming issues and concerns.

Attendees: Program will be targeted towards planners in Connecticut and other municipal staff, Commission members and others interested in learning how to provide a supportive atmosphere for agriculture in their communities.

**This program is worth 1.5 CM credits for AICP planners.**

Program Facilitator: Lisa Bassani, Project Director, Working Lands Alliance (a project of American Farmland Trust). The program will conclude with a Q & A session.

### Agenda *(subject to change)*

1. Introduction (Lisa Bassani – American Farmland Trust; 5 min)
2. Status of Agriculture in Connecticut (Kip Kolesinskas – Conservation Consultant; 10 min)
3. Fostering a Supportive Community Atmosphere for Agriculture (Phil Chester, AICP, Lebanon Town Planner; Steve Kleppin, New Milford Forest and Farmland Preservation Committee; 25 min)
4. Farmland Protection at Local Level (Cameron Weimar, CT Department of Agriculture Farmland Preservation Director; 15 minutes)
5. Engaging Farmers and Agricultural Community in Planning Process (Joan Nichols, CT Farm Bureau Association Director of Community Outreach – 10 min)
6. Tools and Assistance to Bolster Agriculture in Communities (Kip Kolesinskas – 10 minutes)
7. Question and Answer (15 minutes)

## **Speaker Biographies**

### **Kip Kolesinskas**

*Consulting Conservation Scientist – American Farmland Trust*

Kip Kolesinskas is currently a Consulting Conservation Scientist and his current projects include assisting agencies, NGO's, and private individuals with farmland protection, land access and affordability for new and beginning farmers, farmland restoration, and climate change adaptation strategies. He is a member of the Working Lands Alliance Steering Committee, and the Connecticut Council on Environmental Quality. Kip was formerly the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service State Soil Scientist for Connecticut and Rhode Island, where he worked extensively with farmers, educators, government and nonprofits to help them protect farmland and wetlands, and use soils information to make better informed land use decisions. Kip received an A.A.S. in Plant Science from SUNY Cobleskill, a B.S. in Soil Science from Cornell University, and completed additional coursework at Texas A&M and Lancaster University and Schumacher College in the UK.

### **Philip Chester**

*Town Planner, AICP – Town of Lebanon*

Philip Chester, AICP, holds professional degrees in planning and architecture. He has helped establish successful agricultural preservation programs, mandatory cluster regulations, village district zoning and other smart growth initiatives in several communities in CT. In 2011 Phil was the recipient of the *Outstanding Small Town or Rural Planner* award from the American Planning Association Small Town and Rural Planning Division. In 2015 the Town of Lebanon was bestowed *Community of the Year* by the CT Chapter of the American Planning Association in recognition of the on-going efforts to preserve its agricultural-based economy and town character.

### **Steve Kleppin**

*Director of Planning and Zoning, Town of New Canaan*

A member of New Milford Farmland & Forest Preservation Committee since 2006 and Chair for the last four years, Steve Kleppin is also full-time Director of Planning and Zoning for the Town of New Canaan and owner of Windswept Farm, a choose-and-cut Christmas tree farm based in New Milford. These three different disciplines allow Steve to view farmland preservation from the perspective of the farmer, the municipality, which may have to expend funds to preserve a parcel, and as a planner in determining how this particular parcel fits into the long term planning of a municipality.

### **Cam Weimar**

*Director of Farmland Preservation, CT Department of Agriculture*

Cam Weimar directs the farmland preservation programs for the State of Connecticut, including community farms, farmland restoration, and CT Farmlink. Cam has been an urban planning professor, planning consultant, land trust director, and a municipal planner. He holds a doctorate in Natural Resources Planning from the University of Michigan and a Master of Urban Planning from the University of Virginia.

**Joan Nichols**

*Director of Member Relations and Community Outreach, CT Farm Bureau Association*

Joan Nichols is the Director of Member Relations and Community Outreach for Connecticut Farm Bureau Association. In this role, she provides one-on-one assistance to farmer members on a variety of issues related to running an agricultural business including but not limited to: taxation and land use, transportation, labor laws, marketing, etc. Joan also coordinates a variety of educational programs for Connecticut farmers.