

**TOWN OF COLUMBIA  
SPECIAL TOWN MEETING MINUTES  
NOVEMBER 13, 2012**

A Special Town Meeting of the electors and citizens qualified to vote in the Town of Columbia, Connecticut was held in Yeomans Hall, 323 Route 87, Columbia on Tuesday, November 13, 2012 at 7:30 p.m.

Present were Carmen Vance, First Selectman, Richard J. Szegda, Robert W. Hellstrom, William O'Brien, and Robert J. Bogue, Selectmen, Jonathan Luiz, Town Administrator, Rich Roberts, Town Attorney.

**MODERATOR:** Mark Vining  
**TOWN CLERK:** Robin M. Kenefick  
**CITIZENS:** 125 +/- Present

The meeting was called to order by Carmen Vance, First Selectman at 7:30 p.m. The meeting was turned over to the Moderator.

**CLAUSE 1:** Motion was made by Carmen Vance.

**I MOVE** to purchase from Ronald Szegda the development rights to 113.453 acres in the amount of \$198,769.66 per the fully executed agreement entitled "Agreement to Purchase Development Rights between the State of Connecticut, Town of Columbia, Connecticut Farmland Trust, INC., and Ronald H. Szegda." The motion was seconded and the floor was opened to C. Vance to speak on the motion.

C. Vance began with a little background information on this proposal. State statute requires each town to adopt a Plan of Conservation & Development (POCD), the goal being to provide a vision for the town's future and the specific strategies to reach that goal. Columbia's plan was completed in 2006. In 2000, a commission through Planning & Zoning surveyed residents, with the vast majority wanting to retain the rural character of the town. The Plan has ten strategies, three of which include community character (preservation), natural resources (protection of open space) and agriculture (support of). In 1997, the goal of the state was that 21% of land be preserved as open space by 2023, shared by the state (10%) and municipalities (11%). Purchasing development rights is the best way to support the goal of retaining rural character. The individual still owns the property, pays the property taxes and is free to sell the land, however it can only be sold in its current state for its agricultural use. C. Vance turned over the floor to Jonathan Luiz, Town Administrator, for a presentation on the economics of this proposal.

J. Luiz began by indicating this proposal was initiated by Ronald Szegda. It is a priority for the state to preserve working farms and their goal is to increase the amount of properties purchased, through development rights. Ronald Szegda applied to the Farmland Preservation program run by the Connecticut Department of Agriculture, which accepts applications then evaluates the farm, land, and area around the sight for

acceptance into the program. It is Ron Szegda's intention to continue farming the land. The State has approved everything to this point and it is now up to the Town of Columbia to act. A slide-show presentation was given, showing pictures and an aerial view of the property. A work-up on property taxes shows insignificant changes if the development rights are purchased. The property is still designated as farm land. A chart comparing purchasing of the development rights versus development of the property shows a projected savings to the town if the farm remains undeveloped.

The Moderator opened the floor up to discussion. Those who spoke were in favor of this proposal. One resident was unsure how to vote on the proposal. Seeing there were no further questions, the Moderator put the proposal to vote by rereading the motion and asking for a voice vote on the motion. On a voice vote, with only three NO votes, the motion carried.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:05 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Robin M. Kenefick  
Columbia Town Clerk