



Lebanon Conservation and Agriculture Commission

Conservation and Agriculture Commission Charge:

To advocate for conservation and agricultural issues before non-profit agencies, civic organizations, municipal boards and commissions and residents; recommend lands for preservation; provide information and guidance on protecting natural resources and agricultural viability; increase awareness and promote the value of natural resources and agriculture; and serve as conduit between local farmers, government and non-farmers.

Tax deductible donations can be made to the Town of Lebanon Open Space Account.

**Fall 2015
Volume V**

Conservation and Agriculture Commission Activities

The Conservation and Agriculture Commission works to fulfill its charge established by Town Ordinance in 2012, which includes promoting Lebanon's *Plan of Conservation and Development*.

The Commission is involved in several preservation projects and advises Town boards, commissions and residents on conservation and agricultural issues.

The Commission also partners with likeminded

organizations such as CT Farmland Trust, Joshua's Trust, and State and Federal agencies to meet residents' needs.

A major land preservation project completed this year was the creation of a 176-acre state conservation area at Lake Williams (see also article on page 2).

Town staff, along with the Commission, facilitated numerous meetings with the State over 2 years and followed the preservation process closely on behalf

of the town and Liebman family (property owners).

The Commission continues to seek preservation funds and advocate for property owners looking to preserve their land.

The Commission maintains walking trails to Commons Hill and the Five-Mile Rock (maps available online) and is available as a resource on matters of protecting our rich natural resources and preserving agriculture!

Joyce Okonuk, Retiring First Selectman

Joyce Okonuk first held the Office of First Selectman from 1991-2001. This was during a time of tremendous growth in Lebanon – both in terms of population gain and open space loss.

When Joyce returned to the office of First Selectman in 2005, she advocated for regulations, ordinances, policies and staff to help preserve Lebanon's rural agricultural character and open space roots.

She advocated for the reorganization of the Conservation and Agriculture Commission; established the town's

farmers market; conducted studies to determine the value of agriculture to the community; and, worked with residents interested in land preservation.

Today, Lebanon is the State's leader in farmland preservation and a self-branded agricultural community. People move to Lebanon partly because of its open space successes.

"I'll continue to advocate for preserving Lebanon's character while promoting responsible growth." said Okonuk.

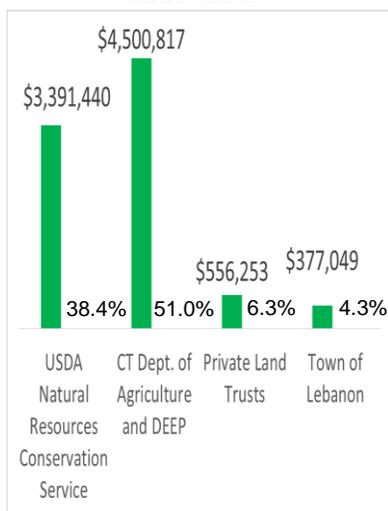


Joyce Okonuk retires this month after serving 20 years as Lebanon's First Selectman

Fortunately for Lebanon, Joyce will continue to serve the community as the newest member of its Planning and Zoning Commission.



**Open Space Funding Sources
2006-2015**



Since 2006 Lebanon’s local share of the \$8.8 million cost to preserve 2,302 acres of land will be \$380,000 or \$165 an acre.

Open Space Funding Update

Lebanon’s land preservation program began in earnest in 2006. Since that time Town Meeting has approved \$520,000 for open space preservation of which \$380,000 has been committed for specific projects.

This local investment represents 4.3% of the \$8.8 million that will be paid to local property owners to preserve 2,302 acres of land. 95.7% of the preservation fund will come from the USDA-NRCS, CT Dept. of Ag., CT Dept. of Energy and Environ. Protection and our non-profit partners.

In other words each local tax dollar Lebanon spends

on land preservation will be matched by \$23 from our preservation partners.

Indeed, to date Lebanon’s local investment in land preservation has resulted in a significant return on the dollar, allowing the great majority of funds to flow into the community from our preservation partners, all of whom require matching funds to preserve land.

Lebanon’s land preservation goal, as articulated in its *Plan of Conservation and Development*, is to “maintain a land preservation fund working balance of \$500,000” and preserve “at least 2,000 acres of land” between 2011-2020.

Since 2011, 1,269 acres have been preserved and it is expected that an additional 492 acres are on track to be preserved next year.

The Town accepts tax deductible cash donations dedicated for land preservation. If you are interested in donating, please send a check made payable to “Town of Lebanon Open Space Account”.

It is important to note that landowners regularly approach the Town to ask for assistance in preserving their land and that the Conservation and Agriculture Commission and town staff are here to assist them.

Lebanon Farmers Market Completes Ninth Season

Lebanon Farmers Market just completed its ninth season! We wish to thank all of the vendors and customers for making the Market a 20-week community event. We hear from many Lebanon residents about the value of holding our own Farmers Market.



In addition to purchasing local vegetables, cheese, fruit, meat, eggs, honey, maple syrup, baked and prepared foods, flora and fauna, and local artistry, neighbors come to the Market to share in conversation and enjoy the sunshine!

The Market provides a local venue where

farmers can sell their products and customers can enjoy their purchase in a welcoming and safe environment at Town Hall.

The Market is sponsored and run by the town, with

additional financial support provided by:

- ✓ CT Dept. of Agriculture
- ✓ Farmers Cow
- ✓ Scotts Company
- ✓ Prides Corner Farm
- ✓ Kofkoff Egg Farms
- ✓ Charles River Labs
- ✓ Savings Institute Bank & Trust

The Market has live music each week and operates multiple special events such as pumpkin painting, kids-fun day, a dog parade and monthly omelet tasting.

A special thank you to our Market Masters Mary Ellen and Bradley Wieczorek.

See you on June 4, 2016 when the Farmers Market kicks off its 10th season!

Liebman Property on Lake Williams: PRESERVED

The Liebman family came to Lebanon 100 years ago to run Grand Lake Lodge on Lake Williams and establish a poultry farming business. The Lodge catered to mostly Jewish families and was a popular respite for those living in urban centers.

The Liebman's sold the Lodge in 1955, but Harold Liebman, his wife Florence and their children Susan and Leon remained in town and raised their families. They also retained 176 acres of property on both sides of Lake Williams.

Harold went on to serve the town as a member of the Board of Selectmen, as State Representative and as a 46-year member of the Planning and Zoning Commission, serving 38 years as Chair.

In 1993 Harold and Florence donated the land to the town for the construction of the Lake Williams Dam. In 2005 Harold was voted Lebanon's Citizen of the Year for his many contributions to the town.

Developers had approached the Liebman's for decades looking to develop their land. In 2013 Florence,



Susan and Leon approached the town asking for assistance to help preserve part of their rich family legacy.

The town reached out to the Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection, facilitating multiple site meetings and closely monitoring the process with the goal of seeing this land preserved as a state conservation area.

According to Joyce Okonuk, outgoing First Selectman, "I believe that Harold would be proud of his children's efforts to preserve this valuable resource. We are all truly fortunate for the Liebman family contribution to our community, which will now also include access to this unique property."

Leon Liebman notes that "My grandfather, father and son loved this land. This is what they would have wanted to keep it unchanged."

Susan Liebman notes that "The land has been in our family for generations. I'm both sad and sorry to see it go."

The Liebman property contains a large area of Lake Williams, including several islands and land on both sides of the lake, which will soon be accessible to the public.

The town is proud to have assisted the Liebman family in preserving their family legacy. Be on the lookout for the State announcement regarding this 176-acre preserve.

For a "Lebanon CT Farm Country" bumper sticker stop by Town Hall.

Studies show that Open Space and Preserved Farmland help control property taxes and that Lebanon residents support its funding!

According to Lebanon's *Cost of Community Services Study*, OPEN SPACE and PRESERVED FARMLAND require \$0.17 on the tax dollar for Town services rendered; whereas, residential development requires \$1.12 in town-service costs (including education) for each tax dollar collected.

In other words, OPEN SPACE and FARMLAND pay more than their fair share in local taxes and help subsidize municipal service costs required by residential development.

- According to Lebanon's *Land Conservation Survey*, residents value the town's farming history and heritage.
- 96% believing that working farms make the town a better place to live.
 - 77% believing that the town should fund land preservation efforts.
 - 71% believing it important to preserve additional farmland and open space and where the town should be focusing its planning efforts.

The **Rails to Trails Committee** was bestowed Lebanon's 2015 Conservation Award by the Conservation and Agriculture Commission for its dedication to seeing the completion of the Air Line Trail.

**LEBANON CONSERVATION &
AGRICULTURE COMMISSION**

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Lebanon, CT 06249

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We're on the Web!
www.lebanonct.gov

Beltane Farm: PRESERVED

Beltane Farm is a 22-acre goat dairy located at 59 Roger Foote Road. Beltane was preserved with funding from the CT Dept. of Agriculture, Town of Lebanon and Connecticut Farmland Trust.

Beltane Farm makes a variety of fresh and aged cheeses as well as yogurt from the milk produced from a herd of 100 Oberhalsi, La Mancha and Saanen dairy goats.

Farm owners Paul Trubey and Mark Pearsall employ ten people who milk the goats twice daily

and attend 15 farmers markets – including Lebanon's Farmers Market.

"Although we have a lot of stores and restaurants that carry our cheese, it's the farmers markets which are the real life blood of the farm," says Trubey. "I think people are looking to directly support local farms across the state. We are so lucky in Lebanon to have so many small, niche farms producing a whole variety of local food."



Farmer Paul Trubey

Beltane farm is open to the public on Sundays October through Christmas for tastings and tours from 11:00 am to 3:00 pm.

About the Conservation and Agriculture Commission..

Lebanon's Conservation and Agriculture Commission is a ten-member volunteer advisory board made up of town residents. Our mission is to protect Lebanon's rural character and natural resources.

Our role is to advise town boards, commissions and residents on ways to best protect Lebanon's valuable natural resources and promote open space and farmland preservation.

The Commission meets the first Monday of each month at 4:30 p.m. in Town Hall. Meetings are always open to the public and we look forward to hearing your ideas and feedback.

CT Department of Agriculture Support

Funding for this newsletter was provided by a Farm Viability Grant made possible by the CT Department of Agriculture through the Community Investment Act, 05-228.

In addition to supporting Connecticut's farmers, the Department provides funds to help support Lebanon's Farmers Market and to preserve Lebanon's farmland.

The Connecticut Department of Agriculture may be reached at (860) 713-2500 or www.ct.gov/doag.