



Agricultural Commission

AI generated Summary of Public Hearing

February 26, 2026

7:00 – 9:00 PM

This public hearing is Called to Order: It is being conducted by the Agricultural Commission regarding the Board of Health's proposed regulation: The Keeping of Livestock and Manure Management. The regulation would replace the existing Manure Guidelines and Stable Regulations.

The **authority** to hold this public hearing comes from Mass General Law, Chapter 111, section 31 establishing a 45 day review period in which the Ag Commission can hold a public hearing and provide comments and recommendations to the Board of Health. That period ends March 5th.

We have alerted the Board of Health we will be asking for an extension to schedule a joint meeting with them to discuss the regulation, our edits, and the transcript of this meeting. The Ag Commission is doing everything in its power to advocate for you, including working with an attorney reviewing the regulation. We'll be reviewing her edits this coming Monday night at our remote meeting so please come, if you have time.

Continue emailing us with your comments and recommendations. Also watch the Ag Commission page on the town website as we'll be posting information.

Mass General Law gives Boards of Health the authority to make reasonable health regulations. They are not required to present those regulations to town meeting.

Presumably the flip side of their authority is that the regulations cannot be unreasonable. So, Is the Keeping of Livestock and Manure Management regulation reasonable? Your comment on that question is at the heart of this public hearing tonight.

I will now read letters into the record. Letters read into the record from Lauren Davis, Jennifer Gingras, Dan Cernese, Beth Faxon, Caroline Abely, Eric Piper, Deb Fountain.

When I recognize each person, please provide your name and address. For those attending remotely, the Chat room is available, and you can raise your hand to catch Eric's attention. Everyone feels deeply about this regulation, so let's be gentle with our language.

The final action tonight will be the Commission's vote to close the public hearing.

AI summary:

Many residents noted Pepperell's long-standing agricultural character and emphasized the importance of maintaining policies that support both commercial and small-scale farming.

Concerns About Permitting Requirements

Some residents expressed concern about the proposed requirement for permits for livestock ownership, particularly for small-scale or backyard livestock.

Potential Impact on Small Properties

Several speakers stated that setback requirements and manure management provisions may be difficult to meet for smaller parcels or hobby farms.

Administrative Considerations

Participants noted that implementing a permit system could require additional administrative oversight and enforcement resources.

Neighbor Relations and Complaint Processes

Some comments suggested that regulations relying on nuisance or odor complaints could increase conflicts between neighbors.

Legal and Regulatory Questions

Participants raised questions regarding alignment between the proposed regulations, zoning bylaws, and state Right-to-Farm protections.

Alternative Approaches Mentioned

Participants discussed several possible alternatives, including:

- complaint-driven enforcement mechanisms
- clearer operational thresholds
- expanded education on best agricultural practices
- community or regional manure composting options

Next Steps

The Agricultural Commission indicated it will continue collecting feedback and reviewing possible approaches before further discussion with the Board of Health.

Motion to adjourn: Eric Piper, seconded by Naomi Soden. Meeting adjourned at 9:00 PM.