

**HOUSE . . . . . No. 689**

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

PRESENTED BY:

*Kate Hogan*

To the Honorable Senate and House of Representatives of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts in General Court assembled:

The undersigned legislators and/or citizens respectfully petition for the adoption of the accompanying bill:

An Act to establish municipal agricultural commissions.

PETITION OF:

NAME:	DISTRICT/ADDRESS:
<i>Kate Hogan</i>	<i>3rd Middlesex</i>
<i>Ann-Margaret Ferrante</i>	<i>5th Essex</i>
<i>Jennifer E. Benson</i>	<i>37th Middlesex</i>
<i>John W. Scibak</i>	<i>2nd Hampshire</i>
<i>Stephen Kulik</i>	<i>1st Franklin</i>
<i>Keiko M. Orrall</i>	<i>12th Bristol</i>
<i>Steven S. Howitt</i>	<i>4th Bristol</i>
<i>Timothy R. Madden</i>	<i>Barnstable, Dukes and Nantucket</i>
<i>Carolyn C. Dykema</i>	<i>8th Middlesex</i>
<i>Sarah K. Peake</i>	<i>4th Barnstable</i>
<i>James B. Eldridge</i>	<i>Middlesex and Worcester</i>
<i>Gailanne M. Cariddi</i>	<i>1st Berkshire</i>
<i>Barbara L'Italian</i>	<i>Second Essex and Middlesex</i>
<i>Chris Walsh</i>	<i>6th Middlesex</i>
<i>Elizabeth A. Malia</i>	<i>11th Suffolk</i>

**HOUSE . . . . . No. 689**

By Ms. Hogan of Stow, a petition (accompanied by bill, House, No. 689) of Kate Hogan and others that cities and towns be authorized to establish agricultural commissions for the promotion and development of the agricultural resources. Environment, Natural Resources and Agriculture.

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

In the One Hundred and Eighty-Ninth General Court  
(2015-2016)

An Act to establish municipal agricultural commissions.

*Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives in General Court assembled, and by the authority of the same, as follows:*

1 Chapter 40 of the General Laws is hereby amended by inserting the following after  
2 section 8K:

3 Section 8L. A city or town which accepts this section may establish an agricultural  
4 commission hereinafter called the commission, for the promotion and development of the  
5 agricultural resources of said city or town and to buy, hold, manage, license or lease land for  
6 agricultural purposes. Such commission shall educate the public on agricultural issues, advocate  
7 for farmers, farm businesses and farm interests, assist in resolving farm related problems or  
8 conflicts, conduct research into its local land areas and shall seek to co-ordinate the activities of  
9 unofficial bodies organized for similar purposes, and may advertise, prepare, print and distribute  
10 books, maps, charts, plans and pamphlets which in its judgment it deems necessary for its work.  
11 Among such plans may be a plan which shall be, as far as possible, consistent with the town  
12 master plan and with any regional plans relating to the area. The commission may, from time to

13 time, amend such plan. Such plan shall show agricultural facilities areas and any other matters  
14 which may be shown on a plat index under section thirty-three of chapter one hundred and  
15 eighty-four. Acquisitions of interests in land under this section and other municipal open lands  
16 shall be shown thereon as well as lands owned by other entities kept open through any legal  
17 requirement. Such plan shall show other areas which public necessity requires to be retained for  
18 agricultural use. It shall keep accurate records of its meetings and actions and shall file an annual  
19 report which shall be printed in the case of towns in the annual town report. The commission  
20 may appoint a director, clerks, consultants and other employees, and may contract for materials  
21 and services within available funds insofar as the same are not supplied by other departments.  
22 The commission shall consist of not less than three nor more than seven members of which a  
23 majority shall be farmers or employed in some facet of agriculture. In the event such farmers do  
24 not exist in the city or town the commission shall include a majority of members with knowledge  
25 and experience in agricultural practices or knowledge of related agricultural business. In cities  
26 the members shall be appointed by the mayor, subject to the provisions of the city charter, except  
27 that in cities having or operating under a Plan D or Plan E form of city charter, said appointments  
28 shall be by the city manager, subject to the provisions of the charter; and in towns they shall be  
29 recommended by the commission once the commission is established and appointed by the  
30 selectmen, excepting towns having a manager form of government, in which towns appointments  
31 shall be made by the town manager, subject to the approval of the selectmen. When a  
32 commission is first established, the terms of the members shall be for one, two or three years,  
33 and so arranged that the terms of approximately one third of the members will expire each year,  
34 and their successors shall be appointed for terms of three years each. Any member of a  
35 commission so appointed may, after a public hearing, if requested, be removed for cause by the

36 appointing authority. A vacancy occurring otherwise than by expiration of a term shall in a city  
37 or town shall be filled for the unexpired term in the same manner as an original appointment.  
38 Said commission may receive gifts, bequests or devises of personal property or interests in real  
39 property of the kinds mentioned below in the name of the city or town, subject to the approval of  
40 the city council in a city or of the selectmen in a town. It may purchase interests in such land  
41 with sums available to it. If insufficient funds are available or other reasons so require, a city  
42 council or a town meeting may raise or transfer funds so that the commission may acquire in the  
43 name of the city or town by option, purchase, lease or otherwise the fee in such land or water  
44 rights, conservation or agricultural restrictions, easements or other contractual rights including  
45 conveyances on conditions or with limitations or reversions, as may be necessary to acquire,  
46 maintain, improve, protect, limit the future use of or otherwise conserve and properly utilize  
47 open spaces in land and water areas within its city or town, and it shall manage and control the  
48 same. The commission shall adopt rules and regulations governing the use of land and waters  
49 under its control, and prescribe penalties, not exceeding a fine of one hundred dollars, for any  
50 violation thereof. Any commission duly formed prior to the passage of this act shall be  
51 grandfathered and no further action is necessary by that municipality and the prior existing  
52 commissions shall have that authority enacted by this Act.

53         A city or town may appropriate money in any year to an agricultural preservation fund of  
54 which the treasurer shall be the custodian. The custodian may deposit or invest the proceeds of  
55 said fund in savings banks, trust companies incorporated under the laws of the commonwealth,  
56 banking companies incorporated under the laws of the commonwealth which are members of the  
57 Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation, or national banks, or invest it in paid up shares and  
58 accounts of and in co-operative banks or in shares of savings and loan associations or in shares

59 of federal savings and loan associations doing business in the commonwealth, and any income  
60 therefrom shall be credited to the fund. Money in said fund may be expended by said  
61 commission for any purpose authorized by this section.