

May 12, 2025

My name is Matt Ouellette and I'm the pesticide manager for The Grounds Crew based here in Falmouth. These are some of my thoughts and takeaways from the town council meeting on Monday May 12th.

Overall I feel there are a few parts of this ordinance I find to be disingenuous. A number of people from the conservation committee got up to speak and touted that the ordinance limits the time that fertilizer is allowed to be applied in Falmouth and would result in less fertilizer being applied as a whole. Without directly looking at the dates I remember them to be approximately December to sometime in March. This is just something that can be put on the ordinance to draw support from the community in hopes of having this passed. To think that companies are applying fertilizer in a snowstorm in January is a bit ludicrous. The only reason to have this is for support, it's not a meaningful statement.

The next part is when council and committee members were stating how this would ban neonicotinoids in the town of Falmouth. There's two reasons to be concerned about this. First, the committee is either aware of the outcry from beekeepers and people concerned with the pollinator community and are trying to make the public fearful and therefore support this ordinance by saying they will eliminate neonics, or secondly, the committee is unaware of the fact that the state of Maine has already banned neonics in 2021. The first is a scare monger tactic and the second is concerning for a number reasons least of which being that people are passing an ordinance that they clearly don't have the understanding of what they are putting forth or voting for.

Part of my job for The Grounds Crew is servicing the town of falmouth and the school systems for their playing fields. In that role I was asked to help initially with the first go round of talks about a ban 4-5 years ago. At that time it was decided to have a more back seat role and to monitor and record data to judge if there was a problem that needed action. In the first summary meeting the number of pounds of

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fertilizer was brought up which roughly totalled 300,000 pounds of fertilizer applied in the year in the town. At that meeting I brought up how this was a sensational number but not a meaningful one. It's sensational to see such a large number but it has none of the pertinent information attached to it. There is nothing in that number that says how it was applied, where it was applied, what rates it was applied at, all things that would be needed to give an honest evaluation of the issues. 300,000 pounds of fertilizer equates to .000003 pounds of fertilizer per square foot in the town, which again is not a meaningful number. None of the conversions were done to discuss the amount of nitrogen being applied which is the goal of applying fertilizer to lawns. Using the sensationalised number is only useful to make the residents fearful and gain support, not to convey actual information.

The two application rate at 1lb N/1kftsq is a rule that is not based in any science. If the town would like to limit the amount of Nitrogen being applied to 2lbs per year I don't have an issue with that. I don't think it makes agronomic sense but I can live with it. The part I don't understand is why limit to 2 high rate applications per year. There's no reason to spike plant growth twice a year. Allowing an appropriate number of applications, being 4-5, and limiting the amount of N being put down makes a lot more sense agronomically than arbitrarily stating that there will only be two applications allowed. Allowing for an appropriate number of low rate applications will create better greener lawns for the residents of the town.

Overall I think this ordinance, while commendable, is deeply flawed. My suggestion would be for the town to continue to consider a pesticide ordinance while extending outreach learning programs to the public. I don't believe this ordinance will benefit the town in the way that it is being suggested it will as written currently.

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The Grounds Crew