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Rep. Cook Applauds Bonding for New Opportunities Farming Project *Hi-tech aquaponics farm to create 18 jobs*



Dr. James Gatling, New Opportunities President/CEO, State Rep. Michelle Cook, and William Rybczyk, New Opportunities Director of Research, Development, and Planning at the Legislative Office Building following the Bond Commission meeting

State Rep. Michelle Cook (D-Torrington) applauded the state Bond Commission's approval today of a \$1million loan to local nonprofit New Opportunities Inc. for machinery and equipment to establish an aquaponics fish farm and hydroponic vegetable farm in Torrington.

Aquaponics is the combination of aquaculture (raising fish) and hydroponics (the soil-less growing of plants) that grows fish and plants together in one integrated system. The fish waste provides an organic food source for the plants, and the plants naturally filter the water for the fish.

“I have worked with New Opportunities to secure this bonding for several years, and now they have the capital they need to move forward with a project that benefits our entire community. The farm will create jobs, provide workers training in a hi-tech field, and give residents more access to fresh, local produce,” **Rep. Cook** said. “This project is on the cutting edge of technology – farming today is so much more than the image we have of Old MacDonald’s farm. This is an investment to train workers in a growing industry.”

“New Opportunities is extremely excited to see this project take another step towards becoming a reality. The project will create employment opportunities in an emerging field while also expanding the inventory of locally grown produce available for the community,” said Dr. James Gatling, New Opportunities President/CEO. “These project goals align with the mission of New Opportunities to transform our communities through innovation and partnership. We are grateful to Rep. Michelle Cook for her unwavering support of the project throughout this process.”

As part of the loan agreement, New Opportunities will create 18 jobs over the next three years. The farm will be built in a warehouse on Field Street, across from the Torrington Courthouse. The produce will be sold to local chains and distribution centers, and the operation is expected to be self-sustaining.

New Opportunities Inc. is the community action agency that serves Waterbury, Meriden, Torrington and 27 surrounding towns. They offer a variety of social service programs to eliminate poverty and assist people in need.

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