

Dutchess County Agricultural Advisory Committee

December 16, 2021, 9:00 a.m.

Virtual Teams Meeting

DRAFT MINUTES

Present: Matt Cady, Isaac Coon, Mark Condon, Doug Giles, Deanna Mancuso, Gregg Pulver, Stephanie Radin, Brian Scoralick, Becky Thornton, Jennifer Fimbel, Eoin Wrafter, and Shelby Frangk.

Not Present: Mark Adams, Harry Baldwin, Todd Erling, and Matthew Sabellico.

Introductions

In Chair Matt Sabellico's absence, Vice Chair Becky Thornton welcomed everyone to the meeting. All board members introduced themselves.

Adoption of Minutes – June 7 and August 26, 2021

The June 7th meeting minutes and August 26th Forum meeting minutes were reviewed and accepted by the committee.

Right-to-Farm Dispute Resolution Committee

Eoin explained that some farms have reached out to this committee to receive aid in resolving disputes. These include Barton Orchards in the Town of Beekman and a hay operation in the Village of Pawling. The Committee wrote the farms and communities back regarding the farmers' requests for arbitration. The Town of Beekman declined to be involved in dispute resolution efforts. Both sides of the Pawling dispute have not reached back out after initial contact from the committee. The dispute between the Town of Beekman and Barton Orchards will likely result in an article 78 proceeding regarding a zoning issue associated with the property.

Agricultural Forum Recap

Eoin asked the group what the consensus was about this year's forum format. Since there wasn't a speaker this year, there was additional time for local updates from committee members and allowed for more conversation between committee members, the County Executive, and audience members. Overall, the group liked the new format and received positive feedback from attendees about it. Jen noted that a speaker can be a draw to the event for some folks so that is something we can keep in mind when planning future forums. It's also important to remember that many farmers listen to the presentation in the barns, not in the arena, and so someone who can present well without visual aids is needed. Matt Cady mentioned that he liked how we recognized Harry this year for his many years of dedication to local agriculture. Matt suggested doing this annually to spotlight both a young and seasoned farmer. The group liked this idea, but didn't want to be wed to it every year; instead, it could be done on a case-by-case basis. The group decided to be flexible with the forum format and either engage a speaker if a great one comes along or stick with local updates from committee members.

Farming in Dutchess Virtual Series Update

All five sessions in the 2021 series have been completed. Regarding attendance for each session, the first and last sessions, the Communicating with Your Farmer, Landowner, or Assessor and Food Security sessions, were the most well-attended. Each session is posted on the [County website](#) for later viewing. Shelby will reach out to the County Computer Division to see how many "clicks" each session has received so far. Overall feedback about these was very positive! The group would like to do another Farming in Dutchess series in 2022. Topics could include: Buildings agricultural programs in schools; Conservation easements and PDR programs; Ag value assessment overview; Ag value assessment vs. Ag Districts program; Urban Agriculture; diversity of agriculture;

and new and beginning farmers vs. seasoned ones. Committee members were asked to send any additional ideas for session topics to Shelby and Jen.

Agricultural Navigator Updates

Jen noted some of the tasks that she has been working on for the past few months (July – November) (document attached herein). Highlights during this period included:

- Helped to coordinate four sessions of the Farming in Dutchess Virtual Series – recordings posted on the County’s website and CCEDC YouTube channel.
- Continued discussions about a potential Dutchess County slaughterhouse.
- Assisted two towns with specific issues concerning agriculture.
- Assisted one town with their Comprehensive Plan pertaining to agriculture.
- Met with the Food Sovereignty Alliance to discuss food security and sovereignty issues.
- Discussion of Urban Farming and Ag Value Assessment with local farmers.
- Continuing to update the “Dutchess County Agriculture...It’s a Growing Thing!” Facebook page, the Dutchess County Agriculture Instagram page, and conducting the Farm and Ag Report on two stations every morning 5 days/week (both AM and FM radio (WKIP and WRWD, respectively)).

Student Member on the AAC and Education Sub-Committee Discussion

Mark Condon explained that the wheels are in motion for new youth members to be added to the Ag Advisory Committee. The overall process of adding students to the group will be: The Education Sub-Committee will make student recommendations to the Ag Advisory Committee who will then make recommendations to the County Executive; two students will be added to the committee. For this meeting, Mark prepared a four-page document (attached herein) which outlines the detailed process for adding youth members to the committee and includes a draft application, recruiting methods, and proposed timeline. The group also discussed:

- Student recommendations will be made to the County Executive by May 1st; appointments of new youth members will be made shortly thereafter.
- The new members will attend their first meeting at the 2022 August Ag Forum.
- The 2022 March AAC meeting will be moved to the end of March to allow more time for the Education Sub-Committee to review applications for new youth members.
 - The AAC will review the application recommendations from the Education Sub-Committee electronically.
 - A scoring rubric would be helpful in evaluating these applications.
- Examples of curriculum vitae (for high school students) should be included in the application document as reference for the students.
- Meetings will be moved to evenings to accommodate the new student members.
- The documents will be updated to reflect the students’ involvement in the Education Sub-Committee as well as this group.
- Youth members can be active ag students of any type (e.g. high school, college, etc.).

Mark asked for committee members to review these documents and provide any additional feedback to him.

Solar Projects

Eoin shared documents from Lewis County, NY regarding solar development on farmland and payment-in-lieu-of-taxes (PILOT) agreements (attached herein). Several years ago, the State adopted legislation to allow counties to adopt Solar PILOT policies for large solar installations. Lewis County has enacted a policy, which favors their agricultural economic development when considering solar arrays on farmland by reducing the percentage

discount on the developer's taxes (via the solar PILOT) to conserve prime soils; this effectively disincentives the placement of solar arrays on prime farmland. If Dutchess County were to do this, it would have to be framed and negotiated as an agreement with all county municipalities and school districts. The group agreed to keep this opportunity in mind for the future, but decided to table it for now.

Open Discussion

The group discussed 2022 priorities, including:

- Education for: Ag Districts vs. Ag Value Assessment; and tools for municipalities about planning and zoning for agriculture and farms.
 - The group thought that attending one of the Mayors and Supervisors regular meetings would be beneficial.
- Matt Cady mentioned the need for a county application to help farm and farmers seek out farmworkers. There is a labor shortage for all workers, but especially skilled workers that could work on a farm, that is making it very difficult for farms to stay afloat. Jen mentioned that farms that provide housing seem to be more competitive.

Next Meeting

2022 meetings will take place in late March, June, August (forum), and September. A Doodle poll will be sent to coordinate the next (March 2022) meeting. 2022 meeting will be virtual, in-person, or hybrid (via OWL device) depending on the state of the pandemic.

Meeting adjourned at 10:22 a.m.

Respectfully submitted:

Shelby Frangk, Planner
Dutchess County Planning and Development

Jennifer Fimbel
Senior Resource Educator/Agriculture
Board Bullets
July 22 – September 20, 2021

Ag Navigator

- Meetings and Activities (Virtual and otherwise):
 - Ag Forums #2, 3 and 4 Zoom programs – recordings posted on the County’s website and CCEDC YouTube channel.
 - Ag Forum #5 Planning session
 - Slaughterhouse possibility continued discussion
 - Loss of USDA Slaughterhouse is a big concern
 - Working with Statewide Dairy - Dairy Advancement Program
 - Stephanie and I worked on the AFT Regional Navigator program funding application
 - Spoke with Congressman DelGado’s Ag Advisory Chair about the need for more slaughter facilities in our area as well as the possibility of the relaxation of some guidelines for smaller operations.
 - Live radio interview on WKIP at the Dutchess County Fair
 - Reported out at the Ag Forum at the DCF
 - Collaborating with Collin on a Solar Program for farmers and landowners (statewide program October 26th).

Calls/Emails (76)

- Ag District, Ag Value Assessment questions (12)
 - Dutchess County Tourism (2)
 - Municipal Officials (3)
 - General Ag questions (49)
- DC Ag...It’s A Growing Thing! Facebook continuously updated
 - Recorded 45 Radio spots

Jennifer Fimbel
Senior Resource Educator/Agriculture
Board Bullets
September 20 – November 18, 2021

Ag Navigator

- Meetings and Activities (Virtual and otherwise):
 - Ag Forum #5 Zoom planning session #2
 - Slaughterhouse possibility continued discussion
 - Received AFT Regional Navigator program funding
 - Attended Congressman DelGado’s Ag Advisory
 - Collaborated with Collin on a Solar Program for farmers and landowners (statewide program October 26th)
 - Assisted 2 towns with specific issues concerning agriculture
 - Assisting one town with their Comprehensive Plan pertaining to agriculture
 - Met with the Food Sovereignty Alliance to discuss food security and sovereignty issues
 - Participated in Cornell’s Ag In-Service remotely
 - Attended a meeting of the Town of Poughkeepsie’s Natural Resources Inventory group

- Attended a Regional Navigator (AFT) meeting virtually on solar arrays and farmland
- Attended both BOCES and John Jay FFA Advisory meetings
- Presented at the Columbia Land Conservancy Landowner/Farmer virtual workshop

Calls/Emails (70)

- Ag District, Ag Value Assessment questions (5)
 - Hay yields (3) – farmers hayed into November
 - Soil test results interpretation/explanation (1)
 - “What’s in my hay/pasture” (1)
 - Dutchess County Tourism (1)
 - Municipal Officials (2)
 - General Ag questions (57)
- DC Ag...It’s A Growing Thing! Facebook continuously updated
 - Recorded 40 Radio spots

Jennifer Fimbel

Senior Resource Educator/Agriculture

Board Bullets

November 19 – December 15, 2021

Ag Navigator

- Meetings and Activities (Virtual and otherwise):
 - Ag Forum #5 Zoom Food Security
 - Assisted one Urban Farmer with getting NYS Sales Tax Exemption on purchases for his farm
 - Discussion of Urban Farming and Ag Value Assessment/Ag Districts/Electric/Water/Sewer discount possibilities
 - Scope of Work and budget discussion with DC Planning
 - Slaughterhouse possibility continued discussion
 - Attended virtual AFT Regional Navigator program meeting
 - Assisted 1 town with specific issues concerning agriculture
 - Attended John Jay FFA Advisory meeting

Calls/Emails (36)

- Ag District, Ag Value Assessment questions (3)
 - “What’s in my hay/pasture” (1)
 - Municipal Officials (1)
 - General Ag questions (31)
- DC Ag...It’s A Growing Thing! Facebook continuously updated
 - Recorded 22 Radio spots
 - 10 Vacation Days

The Process

Positions

- Initially, two youth leaders would be appointed. One would fill a two-year term, and the other a one-year term. Beginning in 2023, one new member would be appointed to a two year term.

Application

- Young agriculture leaders of the county will apply with the support of their ag leaders and families.
- Candidates will complete an application and include signatures from at least one parent and the recommending ag leader.

Recruiting

- Letters and applications will go out to all ag education leaders in the community to recruit potential candidates.
- Leaders should seek ambitious potential leaders who will independently apply for a position on the Ag Advisory committee.

Timeline

- Materials will be sent to ag education leaders in early 2022.
- Applications will be due by early March, 2022.
- Applications will be reviewed by the Ag Ed Sub-Committee, and recommendations made to the full DCAAC by April 1, 2022.
- The DCAAC will send recommendations to the County Executive by May 1, 2022. The County Executive will make appointments soon thereafter.
- The new members will attend their first meeting in August, 2022.

Can this timeline be accelerated to allow the new members to attend the May meeting?

Dear Dutchess County Agriculture Leader,

The [Dutchess County Agricultural Advisory Committee \(DCAAC\)](#) is seeking two young community members who would like to promote agriculture education and make recommendations regarding agriculture Dutchess county. The Committee reports to and advises the County Executive on issues and policies regarding agriculture and agri-business in the county. This committee also facilitates implementation of the programs outlined in the Dutchess County Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan.

As agriculture leaders in the county, the DCAAC is seeking your help identify candidates to fill these positions, and to assist them in preparing their applications. The committee recognizes and is grateful for your contributions to agriculture education, and asks for your assistance in filling these newly-created positions. We see this as mutually beneficial, as the Committee would value input from agriculturally-experienced youth members, while these members would gain valuable experience that will benefit them in their future endeavors.

The application materials can be found at [insert link here]. The application deadline is Friday, March 4, 2022. Upon receipt, the DCAAC will review the applications and submit recommendations of candidates to the County Executive for appointment. We expect that the new members will be appointed by May, 2022.

Thank you for your assistance in recruiting candidates for these important advisory positions. If you have any questions, please contact me at condon@sunydutchess.edu.

Your truly,

Matt Sabellico as AAC Chair and/or Mark Condon as Ag Ed Sub-Committee Chair

Call for Applications

Dutchess County Agriculture Advisory Council Youth Leadership Member

The [Dutchess County Agriculture Advisory Committee](#) is seeking applicants to fill two new “Youth Leadership Member” positions. Successful candidates will demonstrate a dedication to agriculture through a variety of activities and a desire to represent their youth colleagues in a county-level leadership and advisory role. Members are expected to attend four meetings throughout the calendar year (February, May, August, and November), and to be available through email as events and issues arise. Please submit the following by Friday, March 4, 2022:

- the completed application form, including required signatures
- a current *curriculum vitae*
- a letter of support from an agriculture teacher or mentor

Please forward questions to Dr. Mark Condon at condon@sunydutchess.edu. Thank you for your interest in this position and for your involvement in Dutchess County agriculture.

-The Dutchess County Agriculture Advisory Committee

[insert names and positions of current members]

**Application for the Position of
Dutchess County Agriculture Advisory Council Youth Leadership Member**

Name:

Address:

Phone:

Email:

High School:

Current Year in High School:

___ freshman

___ sophomore

___ junior

___ senior

Signature of applicant:

Signature of one parent:

Signature of an agriculture program leader/mentor:

Please describe why you are seeking this position, and how you plan to represent your youth colleagues on the DCAAC.

Please describe your past and current involvement in agriculture, including 4-H, FFA, personal or family agricultural endeavors, etc.

Please include a current *curriculum vitae* and a letter of support from a teacher or agriculture program leader.

Commercial Solar Projects

The following will be the standard utilized for Property Tax Abatements for Commercial Solar Projects (Hereinafter "Solar Projects"). In compliance with the policy of the County of Lewis Industrial Development Agency (LCIDA) favoring the preservation of Actively Farmed, Prime Farmland for agricultural purposes, the LCIDA, in determining the amount of a Solar Project PILOT Payment, shall consider whether the land is being Actively Farmed and whether the soil on which a Solar Project is located constitutes Prime Farmland. All Solar Projects shall be eligible for a Real Property Tax Abatement. However, Solar Projects located on land that is not Actively Farmed and/or not designated as "Prime Farmland" shall be eligible for a greater Real Property Tax Abatement as reflected in a reduced PILOT Payment. The terms of the Property Tax Abatement shall be described as follows:

- a. The amount of the PILOT payment shall be determined by the Agency as follows: (i) the actual installed capacity of the Commercial Solar Project, calculated on the third (3rd) business day prior to the date on which the related payment is due pursuant to the PILOT Agreement, times (ii) the Base Megawatt Amount **[or, \$ 5,500.00 per megawatt]**.
- b. In the event that the Solar Project is located on land that is not Actively Farmed, then the PILOT payment shall be reduced by ten percent (10%).
- c. In the event that the Solar Project is located on land other than Prime Farmland, the Solar Project shall be eligible for a reduced PILOT payment. The amount of the reduction shall be 5% if the land is categorized as "Prime – If Drained". The amount of the reduction shall be 10% if the land is categorized as "Land of Statewide Importance". The amount of the reduction shall be 15% if the land is not categorized as "Prime", "Prime – If Drained", nor "Land of Statewide Importance." The amount of the reduction shall be determined by the LCIDA after considering input from the Affected Jurisdictions and the Solar Project applicant. In no event shall the reduction exceed fifteen percent (15%) of the Base Megawatt Amount.
- d. The Agency may take into account the amount of any host community benefit payments payable by the project applicant to any Effected Jurisdictions, or in connection with the funding of the Community Economic Development Fund, in determining the amount of PILOT payments payable by the project applicant.
- e. The term of the PILOT Agreement shall be 15 years.
- f. The PILOT payment determined above shall be increased annually by 2% percent during the term of the PILOT Agreement.
- g. The PILOT Agreement will provide that if the existing assessment of the underlying parcel and existing improvements relating to the Commercial Solar Project does not remain fully taxable on the relevant assessment rolls, the PILOT Agreement shall require that PILOT payments be made with respect to such underlying parcel and existing improvements in an amount equal to 100% of the normal tax with respect thereto.
- h. Note the following defined terms:

"Base Megawatt Amount" means the megawatt amount used by the Agency in calculating the PILOT payments. The Base Megawatt Amount as provided in this UTEP shall initially be equal to \$5,500.00, and such amount shall be fixed for the term of each PILOT Agreement; provided, however, that the Base Megawatt Amount as provided in this UTEP shall be subject to review by the Agency at least annually.

"Commercial Solar Facility" means a group of solar panels and related facilities in the same location intended to be used for the production of electric power to be sold to third parties but shall not include a Small Alternate Energy Facility. In the event of a question whether a solar facility is a Small Alternate Energy Facility or a Commercial Solar Facility, the determination of the Agency on that subject shall be final. A Commercial Solar Facility includes all related equipment determined by the Agency to be necessary or desirable for collecting such electric energy and delivering same to the electric grid but shall not include the land and improvements that were included on the tax rolls of the

Commented [WE1]: We need to pick a number here.

Affected Tax Jurisdictions prior to the commencement of the project of which such Commercial Solar Facility is a part. A Commercial Solar Facility is a facility providing electric energy on a commercial scale and shall include Community Solar projects.

“Small Alternate Energy Facility” means a facility (1) that is determined by the Agency to be a facility described in Section 487(1) of the Real Property Tax Law (including solar or wind energy equipment, a solar or wind energy system, farm waste electric generating equipment, and a farm waste energy system), (2) that is installed or to be installed in a residence, a farm or a small business located within Lewis County and (3) that is not a Commercial Solar Facility.

“Prime Farmland” means land that has been designated as Prime Farmland by the United States Department of Agriculture soil survey.

“Actively Farmed” means that land is currently supporting commercial agriculture enterprises or has been supporting commercial enterprises within the prior eighteen (18) months.

“Affected Jurisdictions” means the municipalities and school district within which a project is located, including the appropriate town, Lewis County, and, if relevant, the appropriate village.