

Dutchess County Agricultural Advisory Committee

February 28, 2018, 10:00 A.M.

Dutchess County Farm & Home Center, 2715 Route 44, Millbrook, NY

MINUTES

Present: Mark Condon, Isaac Coon, Doug Giles, A. Gregg Pulver, Stephanie Radin, Matthew Sabellico, Brian Scoralick, Rebecca Thornton, Eoin Wrafter, Jennifer Fimbel, Harry Baldwin, and Shelby Frangk.

Not Present: Mark Adams, Todd Erling, John Lekic, and Leon Vehaba

Welcome and Introductions

Chair Sabellico opened the meeting at 10:01 a.m.

The November 28th meeting minutes were reviewed and accepted by the committee.

Election of Officers

The group discussed that a temporary chair is necessary to elect officers for a new term. Becky made a motion to appoint Eoin Wrafter as the temporary chair and Stephanie Radin seconded it. Eoin asked for any other nominations for the positions of chair and vice-chair, and none were given. He suggested to vote on the slate as is; Brian Scoralick made a motion to appoint Matthew Sabellico and Becky Thornton as chair and vice-chair, respectively, and Isaac Coon seconded it. Both officers were unanimously appointed.

Oaths of Office

Eoin explained that the Oaths of Office are not an annual occurrence, but align with the date of appointment for each respective member. The Oaths of Office were distributed to committee members. Eoin noted that the Oaths of Office for members whom are “ex-officio” (based on their title and/or agency) do not have an expiration date. **Eoin asked that each member send the document to our new office (85 Civic Center Plaza, Suite 107, Poughkeepsie, NY 12601) once signed and notarized.**

Agriculture Navigator Updates

As was mentioned in the last meeting, Jen noted that Cornell Cooperative Extension Dutchess did apply and receive funding for two small grants (\$5,000 and \$10,000) to solidify a Regional Navigator position and to connect farmers with non-farmers.

Jen noted some of the tasks that she has been working on since the beginning of February. Highlights include:

- She has been asked to speak to the Fire Commissioners of LaGrange, Union Vale, and Beekman to discuss special districts with them and reducing agricultural properties on their fire tax rolls.
- Jen and Eoin attended a Harlem Valley Farm & Food Alliance meeting to discuss a potential Farm Trail for their organization (akin to the Dutchess Wine Trail).
- Jen has been asked to be on Congressman Delgado’s Agricultural Advisory Committee and also the Resiliency Council for Suicide Prevention representing agriculture.
- Jen also mentioned that the Ag Breakfast is Tuesday, March 19th. Anyone wishing to attend should R.S.V.P as soon as possible.
- Jen is continuing to update the “Dutchess County Agriculture...It’s a Growing Thing!” Facebook page. Currently, the page has 354 “likes” and 365 followers. There is now a Dutchess County agriculture

Instagram page, as well. The Farm and Ag Report is on two stations every morning 5 days/week (both AM and FM radio (WKIP and WRWD, respectively)).

Tech Memo – Farm-Friendly Audit of Comprehensive Plans and Zoning Codes

Shelby distributed the draft Farm-Friendly Audit Tech Memo. She explained that this document is based on the results of the farm-friendly audit that the Planning Department has been working on. The tech memo is a summary of the county-wide results of the audit and includes a municipal toolkit for communities to implement farm-friendly practices in their land use documents. Shelby also explained that each municipality's farm-friendly audit results were sent to the respective mayor/supervisor, as well as the planning board and zoning board of appeals chairs. The individualized municipal audits included the responses to each question, including any related comments and zoning code sections. Feedback/comments were received from almost half of Dutchess County communities. Shelby also mentioned that there will be a [Dutchess County Planning Federation eNewsletter article](#) based on the same topic released today. **Shelby requested that committee members send any feedback/comments/questions regarding the tech memo to her/Eoin.**

2019 Initiatives/Priorities

The group discussed the 2019 initiatives for the committee. Eoin mentioned that, as a group, we meet on an infrequent basis and the development/progression of these initiatives may necessitate smaller working groups. Also, Eoin mentioned that we may want to consider narrowing our focus to only a few of these initiatives to further prioritize our efforts.

- **Development of a county-wide Right-to-Farm Law:** It was discussed that County staff at the Planning Department and the Legislature will take on the role of developing the county-wide Right-to-Farm Law. As desired, committee members can be involved in both the research and development of this policy. Once finalized, the draft law will be presented to the committee for their review and approval.
- **Thresholds/criteria for agricultural operations versus commercial use:** Committee members discussed this initiative, and based on the nature, scope, and importance of this issue to Dutchess County agriculture, the group decided that the Agricultural and Farmland Protection Board would be the best avenue to explore this topic.
- **Farmland preservation, in general, and related to solar farms/uses:** The committee clarified this initiative further. It was discussed that the topic was originally introduced to the committee because local communities were inquiring about how to preserve farmland in the wake of increasing solar farm applications. Brian noted that the Climate Smart Communities Task Force may be a potential partner to delve into this topic with, as the group is composed of experts in the energy field. Brian added that he and Eoin are regularly part of those meetings and could be liaisons between the two groups regarding this topic. Committee members decided that it may be beneficial to provide the Climate Smart Communities Task Force with some issues/concerns related to agriculture and solar farms to help guide them in their process and potentially develop a best practices guide.
- **Fees and Permits for agricultural buildings:** Committee members discussed that fees and permits associated with agricultural buildings in a pervasive issue locally. Some communities may not be aligned with Ag & Markets guidance on what is considered an agricultural building, and therefore, inconsistently apply the rules and regulations to farm buildings. The group discussed that a farmer and landowner toolkit/how-to-guide could be assembled to give guidance on how this process should work. **Within three weeks, Eoin requested that committee members send specific concerns/issues regarding this topic.** Some initial ideas were ag permits and fees; ag value assessment; the 10-year exemption; and

checklists regarding processes concerning the building inspector and assessor. The relationship between agricultural districts and ag value assessment could also be reiterated in these documents.

- Other checklists of value might be farmland preservation/easements and agri-tourism/signage laws (related to limited liability issues on the part of farmers).
- **Agricultural economic development, including transition planning, economic/business planning, and processing/warehousing:** The group discussed that the need for a processing/warehousing facility and also transporting animals to and from these facilities has been a known issue for a long time; a study by Glynwood a few years ago solidified this need. There are a few issues surrounding this need (i.e. slaughterhouse), as it is difficult to find an owner/operator for this kind of facility and it is an expensive, mostly seasonal operation. A mobile slaughterhouse was discussed and due to a variety of reasons (i.e. only a kill facility; can't hang or cut carcasses; can't necessarily harvest steers; need power/water facilities to accommodate trailer), it is not feasible at this time.
 - The group noted that transition planning is a widespread issue across all kinds of agriculture and the committee may want to focus on this issue going forward. This topic may lend itself to a potential training session; Isaac noted that Farm Credit & AgriMark already do this kind of training session.

Open Discussion

Harry distributed a brochure for the New York Farm Bureau and encouraged all committee members to consider joining. He explained that they are an integral part of lobbying for agriculture in New York State.

Eoin noted that the Ag Forum is right around the corner and a speaker should be solidified by May 23rd. **Eoin requested that any ideas for speakers/topics can be sent to him/Shelby. He will also send a follow-up email requesting ideas as the date gets closer.** Some initial ideas include the Taste of NY and NYS Grown & Certified programs.

Next Meeting

The next meeting will be **May 23rd at 10:00 a.m. in the Director's Room at the Dutchess County Farm and Home Center.**

Meeting adjourned at 11:36 a.m.

Respectfully submitted:

Shelby Frangk, Planner
Dutchess County Planning and Development