

## **Dutchess County Agricultural Advisory Committee**

February 27, 2020, 10:00 A.M.

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

### **MINUTES**

**Present:** Mark Adams, Mark Condon, Todd Erling, Doug Giles, Gregg Pulver, Stephanie Radin, Matthew Sabellico, Brian Scoralick, Jennifer Fimbel, Harry Baldwin, and Shelby Frangk.

**Not Present:** Matthew Cady, Isaac Coon, Deanna Mancuso, Rebecca Thornton, and Eoin Wrafter.

#### **Welcome and Introductions**

Chair Sabellico opened the meeting at 10:04 a.m.

The November 21, 2019 meeting minutes were reviewed and accepted by the committee; Mark Condon abstained from voting as he was not present at the meeting.

#### **Election of Officers**

The group suggested to vote on the slate as is with Matthew Sabellico and Rebecca Thornton as Chair and Vice-Chair, respectively. Gregg Pulver made a motion to appoint the officers and Todd Erling seconded it. Both officers were unanimously appointed.

#### **Oaths of Office**

Shelby presented Chair Matthew Sabellico with an updated oath of office, which extends his membership on the committee through December 2022. Shelby also announced that there are two new members on the committee – Deanna Mancuso from Lucky Orphans Horse Rescue and Matthew Cady from G.E. Masten Feeds.

#### **Presentation – Feasibility of Anaerobic Manure Digestors on Dairy Farms (John Jay FFA Chapter)**

Accompanied by their FFA teacher, Patrick Hancock, three students from the John Jay FFA Chapter presented to the group on the feasibility of anaerobic manure digestors on dairy farms, and the potential impacts that biogas recovery can have in reducing greenhouse emissions. The students must present to a public group in preparation for their upcoming district competition and the Ag Advisory Committee has been chosen as that group. The students explained that global warming due to greenhouse gas emissions, including from methane, has already begun to have devastating impacts on the earth. A sizeable portion (40%) of the methane emissions that are released come from the agricultural sector, generally as a by-product from animal waste. Recognizing an opportunity and a need, farmers and agriculturalists have introduced creative methods to curb some of the impacts that their operations can have on the planet, including methane capture/reuse through anaerobic digestors. These systems prevent methane from escaping into the atmosphere and process it into a reliable, renewable energy source. The resulting products from these systems can be utilized in many applications on the farm, including as electricity to power generators and boilers, and the solid and liquid effluents can be used for livestock bedding and fertilizers. The resulting product can also be converted to a cleaner gas and be used to power vehicles. The students pointed to successful cases of these systems being utilized in Europe, particularly Denmark. The Danish have been able to cut greenhouse gas emissions substantially and have become leaders in green energy, and their economy has boomed as a result. As with any technology, these systems have positives and negatives – some of the more challenging aspects of anaerobic digestors are the capital costs to purchase and maintain the devices, the specific environmental conditions necessary to efficiently produce energy, and the wear and tear on the mechanics of the device resulting from the gas production. Overall, the students believe

that anaerobic digestors have a place in reducing greenhouse gas emissions here in the United States. Clearly others agree as this technology/industry was incentivized by the Obama administration.

### **Agricultural Navigator Updates**

Jen noted some of the tasks that she has been working on since our last meeting in November. Highlights during this time period include:

- She has spoken in support of the John Jay FFA Chapter and has acted in an advisory capacity to the John Jay FFA Advisory Committee Board.
- In cooperation with Senator Gillibrand’s office, Jen aided in the organization and registration logistics for the USDA Value-Added Producers grant training; there were over 50 individuals in attendance at the event.
- She attended Congressman Delgado’s Ag Advisory Committee meeting.
- Jen is actively working on the annual Ag Breakfast with Brian Scoralick. Jen encouraged committee members to R.S.V.P sooner rather than later as space for the event is limited.
- Jen noted that questions related to ag value assessment have ramped up – she worked with two assessors and one legislator on issues related to qualified properties within the equine industry.
- Jen is continuing to update the “Dutchess County Agriculture...It’s a Growing Thing!” Facebook page. Currently, the page has 457 followers. The Dutchess County agriculture Instagram page is very popular, 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)).

### **USDA Disaster Designation**

Jen explained the letter from Secretary of Agriculture Sonny Perdue regarding USDA disaster designation and how the letter relates to Dutchess County. She explained that as a result of the excessive rain and flooding that occurred during the 2019 crop year, 43 counties in New York State have been divided into two categories of disaster designation – primary and contiguous disaster counties; Dutchess County is considered a contiguous disaster county. These designations make the counties eligible for certain assistance/emergency loans from the Farm Service Agency. Farmers in the eligible counties (both categories) have eight months from the January 2020 designation to apply for this funding.

### **Agricultural Resources Inventory Application (ARIA)**

Shelby explained that as an update to the [2015 Ag Plan’s Inventory of Resources appendix](#), the [Agricultural Resources Inventory Application \(ARIA\)](#) was developed on the County’s Agriculture website as a searchable application which includes descriptions and contact information for over 70 agricultural entities, including county, regional, state, and federal agencies and organizations, as well as virtual food hubs. Organized by desired topic, this application aims to help farmers, producers, the public, and municipal officials in navigating and further utilizing these agricultural resources.

Shelby asked the group to send any agencies/organizations that they think should be included within this application to her. Todd Erling suggested that [Feed HV](#) be added to the list. She also asked the group whether they think it would be appropriate for certain food-delivery groups, such as Hello Fresh or Misfits Market, to be included in ARIA. The group discussed the idea and came to the consensus that if these groups were to be added then the entries should be framed with potential farmer involvement and potential distribution channels in mind; for example, an entry on Hello Fresh would include information on how a local farmer or producer can become involved in the program (and relates back to a specific person at the organization) to distribute their goods to clients. Other metrics could include whether local farmers are already involved in the food-delivery program or if the food-delivery program has local offices in Dutchess County. Local is an ongoing topic of

discussion and can be defined differently by different groups. Some ways to define local include how far a truck driver can drive in a day, standard mile metrics (e.g. ~500 miles), or the customer's perception of their region.

### **2020 Initiatives/Priorities**

Shelby recapped the ideas mentioned at our last meeting for the 2020 initiatives/priorities including, economic development and discussions related to a regional distribution/wholesale center, as well as youth in agriculture and continuing to foster educational pathways for students interested in agriculture.

Mark Condon announced that starting in fall 2020, an agreement between Dutchess Community College and SUNY Cobleskill will facilitate the transition of certain science-related associate degrees at DCC to science-related bachelor degrees at SUNY Cobleskill. The areas of study included in this agreement are plant and animal sciences. The Education Sub-Committee of the Ag Advisory Committee, which is in the beginning planning stages, will also help to forward the 2020 educational pathways priority.

Jen discussed an example of a community that is taking farm products produced from FFA chapters and distributing them to local schools. She thought that something in this vein could work in Dutchess County. The group agreed that thinking about farm-to-institution pathways coupled with the regional distribution/wholesale center could be one way to enhance agricultural economic development in the region.

### **Open Discussion**

The group discussed the new requirements for farmworker hours related to the recent State legislation and the implications for local farmers.

Shelby asked if a Google Docs document might be a worthwhile way to catalogue committee members' ideas related to the 2020 initiatives and priorities as it allows ideas to be shared in real time and in one place on a fluid basis; the group thought that it may be as future discussions and actions are taken.

### **Next Meeting**

The next meeting will be **May 28<sup>th</sup> at 10:00 a.m.** in the Director's Room at the Dutchess County Farm and Home Center.

Meeting adjourned at 11:48 a.m.

Respectfully submitted:

Shelby Frangk, Planner  
Dutchess County Planning and Development