

## Dutchess County Agricultural Advisory Committee

March 11, 2021, 2:00 p.m.

Virtual Teams Meeting

### MINUTES

**Present:** Mark Adams, Mark Condon, Todd Erling, Deanna Mancuso, Stephanie Radin, Brian Scoralick, Becky Thornton, Jennifer Fimbel, Eoin Wrafter, and Shelby Frangk.

**Not Present:** Matthew Cady, Isaac Coon, Doug Giles, Gregg Pulver, Harry Baldwin, and Matthew Sabellico.

#### **Introductions**

In Chair Matt Sabellico's absence, Vice Chair Becky Thornton welcomed everyone to the meeting. All board members introduced themselves. Rebecca Cossa, agricultural educator from Dutchess County BOCES, also introduced herself and one of her students, Kaelan Halliday, who is a member and officer of the Pine Plains FFA.

#### **Adoption of Minutes – October 29, 2020**

The May 28<sup>th</sup> meeting minutes were reviewed and accepted by the committee.

#### **Agricultural Navigator Updates**

Jen noted some of the tasks that she has been working on for the past few months (November -- March). Highlights during this period included:

- Working with the Ag Advisory Committee on the Farming in Dutchess Virtual Series sessions, the first of which was held on February 24<sup>th</sup>. 29 participants were in attendance at the inaugural session, *Communicating Agriculture: How to Work with Your Assessor and Enhancing Landowner/Lessee Relationships*.
- Working with assessors and landowners on signing forms for those who were not able to gross the minimum sales for Ag Value Assessment due to COVID-19.
- Continuing to respond to questions from the Agri-Tourism industry about moving forward with their operations with the NYS Guidance information.
- Continuing discussions about ag education in Dutchess County with interested and involved parties and stakeholders, including members of our committee.
- Presenting at the Putnam County Ag Roundtable about the Dutchess County Right-to-Farm law and enhancing farm-friendliness.
- She is also 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**

With the help of one of her students, Kaelan, Rebecca Cossa presented about the positive aspects and outcomes of having a student member on the Ag Advisory Committee as our resident youth representative. This idea originally came out of a discussion that took place at the 2019 Agricultural Forum and has evolved since then. Main takeaways from Rebecca's presentation include:

- There are growing number of students interested in agriculture and involved in 4-H and FFA programs.
- This opportunity will help teach students responsibility and how to be leaders in their communities, and can demonstrate to students that they can affect change on a local level.
- Student involvement on this committee will bring a new, broadened perspective to committee members and the committee, in general, as a liaison from the youth community to this group.
- Students seeing other students on this committee will help spur their interest in being involved in this local group.
- Rebecca proposed that a youth representative (grades 9-12; aged 15-18) could serve a one-year term on the committee with a possible extension of up to two years. It was noted that designated alternates may be

appropriate. The youth could work on an enrichment project throughout the year to be presented at the annual Ag Forum. A list of youth could be collected by the Education sub-committee and given to the County Executive for final selection.

- Mark explained the idea of the Education sub-committee and the goals behind its creation, including a network of educational stakeholders with varying experiences in ag education (from kindergarten through adulthood, both formal and informal education), working as cohesive unit to forward ag education in the county. Sub-committee members (e.g. Mark, Jen, Stephanie, Rebecca Cossa, Lisa Dunne, and Michael Woods) and individual working groups of the group are already works in progress.
  - The goal is to have this sub-committee and youth position approved by the committee and County Executive by May 2021 and start the process of choosing a student and adding them to the group shortly thereafter.
  - The request being made by Rebecca, Kaelan, and Mark by way of this presentation is to have the committee endorse and create the sub-committee and youth position. Also requested is a recommendation on how to proceed with a recruitment and selection process/procedure.
    - The committee unanimously voted to create the Education sub-committee and the youth representative position. Eoin will reach out to the County Executive to discuss this position with him and will report back to the group.

### **Farming in Dutchess Virtual Series Update**

The first session of the Farming in Dutchess Virtual Series, *Communicating Agriculture: How to Work with Your Assessor and Enhancing Landowner/Lessee Relationships*, took place on February 24<sup>th</sup>. 29 participants of varying backgrounds were in attendance at the session. Speakers included Isaac Coon, Becky Thornton, Sam Calhoun (Columbia Land Conservancy), and Steve Gotovich (T/Stanford Assessor). Jen was the moderator, and she and Brian helped to provide the landowner perspective at the session. An informal roundtable worked well for this session and panelists, but future sessions may require a more formalized presentation-style session. Another idea is to have questions set aside for panelists in the event that audience questions are not asked. Advertising sessions well in advance via emails and social media is very important; Curtis from Northern Dutchess News could also advertise the sessions. For session #1, both Jen and Shelby received lots of positive feedback about this session from participants and requests for the Zoom link from individuals who were not able to attend. Planning for the second session, a discussion of social and land development pressures is in the works – more information coming soon!

### **Open Discussion**

Eoin mentioned that he shared a NYC Planning Newsletter regarding food access with the group earlier today.

### **Next Meeting**

The next meeting will be Thursday, May 27<sup>th</sup> at 10:00 a.m. via Microsoft Teams.

(Note: This meeting was later rescheduled to a later date.)

Eoin noted that another meeting may be needed to the schedule before the ag forum to introduce the youth representative to the committee.

Meeting adjourned at 11:24 a.m.

Respectfully submitted:

Shelby Frangk, Planner

Dutchess County Planning and Development