

## **Dutchess County Agricultural Advisory Committee**

October 29, 2020, 10:00 A.M.

Virtual Teams Meeting

### **MINUTES**

**Present:** Mark Adams, Matt Cady, Mark Condon, Isaac Coon, Todd Erling, Deanna Mancuso, Gregg Pulver, Matt Sabellico, Jennifer Fimbel, Eoin Wrafter, and Shelby Frangk.

**Not Present:** Doug Giles, Stephanie Radin, Brian Scoralick, Becky Thornton, and Harry Baldwin.

#### **Introductions**

Matt Sabellico welcomed everyone to the meeting. Eoin Wrafter took a roll call of the committee members in attendance.

#### **Adoption of Minutes – May 28, 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 (May – August). Highlights during this period included:

- Jen has received a number of inquiries from new and beginning farmers about farming/land opportunities in Dutchess County. They are also looking for technical advice about their operations.
- There are now 50 farm stores in Dutchess County – only two have closed for the season. Farm stores have fared well throughout the pandemic, in part, due to the #FarmStandFriday initiative.
- Jen has been in contact with the u-pick ag tourism businesses to ensure they are aware of new legislative standards for their operations.
- Jen has been distributing hand sanitizer to local farmers by appointment. This distribution is made available to the County from the NYS DAM.
- Jen met with the statewide livestock educators from around the State. In collaboration with this group, she is working on an online decision tree to give direction to the kind of guidance the farmer may need (e.g. how big is the farm? What type? Etc.).
- Jen is starting to receive calls about issues related to backyard chickens. She said that this topic is timely as some residents seemed to buy chickens in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Arlington Central School District would like to develop an ag education program; Jen has been in contact with the school and is trying to help facilitate this process.
- Jen also underlined the importance of the development of a local slaughterhouse in our area.
- 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)).

#### **Ideas for Virtual Ag Breakfast/Forum Event**

As the 2020 Ag Breakfast and Forum were not able to take place this year due to the pandemic, Matt introduced the idea of a virtual event, combining these two events, that could fill this void. Shelby added that these events were missed by committee members, as well as local elected officials and members of the ag community and public. Ideas for the combined event include either one virtual session or a virtual series composed of a variety of individual sessions. Since time would not necessarily be a factor for this event, like it is for the Ag Breakfast

and Forum, several topics could be discussed in detail during a series-type event. Potential topics include:

- **How to Work with Your Assessor and Landowner vs. Tenant Issues:** This topic could focus on strategies to create and maintain a successful relationship with the farmer's local assessor. This session could also include a discussion regarding the challenges that landowners and tenants may face when farmland is leased and some ideas on how to negotiate these issues.
  - Potential audience members include: Farmers, landowners, assessors
- **Social/Land Development Pressures:** Agricultural operations often feel "pressure" from outside entities – for example, the pressure to sell and/or develop land, the pressure to minimize perceived nuisances because of neighbor complaints, or the pressure to educate local governments on the rights and operations of farms. This topic could discuss these pressures and give farmers some ideas on how to negotiate them.
  - Potential speaker(s) include: Matt Sabellico
- **Ag Education:** This discussion could focus on the educational "pipeline" that individuals can follow in pursuit of a career (or other type of involvement) in agriculture. This includes formal schooling (K-12 and college-level), as well as informal educational opportunities and continuing education for adults.
  - Potential audience members include: School teachers, superintendents, and students; others TBD
  - Session volunteer(s): Deanna
- **Resurgence of Local Food, Farm Markets, and Stores:** Both related to COVID-19 and not, local food has seen a resurgence in our area – individuals are increasingly concerned with where their food comes from. This topic could focus on discussing this trend and give ideas, strategies, and guidance on how farmers and agri-businesses can successfully navigate these still shifting sands.
  - Potential speakers include: Farm market perspective, Farmer perspective, store/distributor perspective
- **Food Security:** This session could focus on identifying the challenges and opportunities related to food security in Dutchess County and across our region, as well as underlining the important connection between food security and local agriculture/farming.
  - Potential speakers include: Poughkeepsie Farm Project, Field Goods

After discussing the virtual event at-length and the potential topics, the group decided to pursue a virtual series with a variety of sessions, starting late 2020/early 2021. All the sessions would be under the umbrella of the larger series – with one name – akin to a Dutchess County ag conference. We can take the feedback, comments, and information that is learned from the series/sessions and report back at the 2021 Ag Breakfast and/or Forum. Jen has graciously agreed to be the moderator for each virtual session. The group decided that 3 to 5 speakers and 1 ½ to 2 hours would be appropriate for each session topic. The likely audience for these sessions would be the ag community, but depending on the specific topic, sessions could be opened to members of the public or other specific interest groups. Depending on the target group for the respective session, the specific session timing and format could be set to meet the needs of that group (i.e. for the ag education topic, it would be best to do in the early evening to capture teachers and students who would be in school earlier in the day). The Four Brothers Drive-In in Amenia (or any other County drive-in) could be utilized as a convening spot for the event/sessions or even for the 2021 Ag Breakfast/Forum, if the fairgrounds are not open yet. Potential technical platforms could be discussed at a later date.

Shelby requested that committee members think about the session topics in advance of our next workshopping meeting (in early December) and jot down any potential speakers that come to mind. Shelby also requested that each committee member send her one (or two) session topics that they would like to be involved with the planning/preparation of.

**2021 Initiatives/Priorities**

The virtual series will be one of the main 2021 priorities/initiatives of the Ag Advisory Committee, with the hopes that the discussions from these sessions will inform future policy efforts. The committee’s other 2021 focus area will be the furtherance of ag education in the County.

**Open Discussion**

Jen informed the group that USDA recently designated Dutchess County as a disaster area because of recent droughts; monies will be available to farmers because of this.

Eoin mentioned that he had recently attended a working group meeting, organized by the NYC Dept. of Planning and Food Policy, to establish a NYC Regional Food Working group. The group consists of regional and city stakeholders with the goal of strengthening the local and regional food systems. The overarching goal is a ten-year food policy plan and then looking at procurement down-the-road. Eoin will report back to the group on this initiative.

Jen noted that she was involved in initials discussions regarding the development of a local food program in Poughkeepsie. Mary Ann Johnson (HVADC) was also involved in these talks.

**Next Meeting**

The committee agreed to meet again in early December to continue plans and discussions for the upcoming virtual event series. Shelby will send a poll to determine the specific date/time.

The group decided that the 2021 meeting schedule would be: Thursday, February 25<sup>th</sup>, Thursday, May 27<sup>th</sup>, Thursday, August 26<sup>th</sup> (Ag Forum, dependent on the fairgrounds being open or a virtual event), and Thursday, November 18<sup>th</sup>. Additional information about meetings will be available as each meeting date approaches.

Meeting adjourned at 11:28 a.m.

Respectfully submitted:

Shelby Frangk, Planner  
Dutchess County Planning and Development