

Dutchess County Agricultural Advisory Committee

May 23, 2018, 10:00 A.M.

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

MINUTES

Present: Mark Adams, Mark Condon, Jennifer Fimbel, Shelby Frangk, Gregg Pulver, Stephanie Radin, Brian Scoralick, Leon Vehaba, Eoin Wrafter, and Ryan O’Sullivan.

Welcome and Introductions

Eoin announced that Chairman Sabellico is unable to attend the meeting due to a family emergency. As the Acting Chairman, Eoin opened the meeting at 10:05 a.m.

Eoin reminded the group that Oaths of Office are required for every appointed committee member on an annual basis. Personalized forms were distributed and filled out by each appointed member in attendance at the meeting. Eoin also mentioned that agendas and minutes will eventually be available on the website. The group may require more formalization, such as the appointing of a Vice Chairman; Eoin will look into this and provide updates to the group when available.

The February 28th meeting minutes were reviewed, but could not be accepted by the committee due to the lack of a quorum; both the February 28th and May 23rd meeting minutes will be reviewed and approved at the upcoming November meeting.

Presentation – Ryan O’Sullivan, [Heroic Food](#) Program Manager

Ryan O’Sullivan is the program manager/veteran coordinator at Heroic Food, which is a non-profit organization that trains veterans to be farmers as a way to transition back into civilian life. Ryan explained that the average age of a New York State farmer is close to 60 years old; the integration of veterans into the farming community provides employment support to farmers and therapeutic support for veterans. Ryan added that the organization started in 2014, is based in Poughkeepsie, and services veterans throughout the Hudson Valley. Ryan noted that there are 500,000 veterans in New York State and over 350,000 in New York City and the Hudson Valley alone. The organization received an operating grant from the USDA and partners with local educational farms, such as Sprout Creek Farm in Poughkeepsie, Liberty Farms in Ghent, and Common Ground in Beacon. Ryan explained the general qualifications required to be deemed an “educational farm” (i.e. a full educational curriculum (via Cornell), a farm setup, workforce/housing development, etc.) and requested that any ideas for educational farm partnerships be sent to him. The organization operates on an “earn-while-you-learn” philosophy with a strong emphasis on hands-on education, as well as sustainable and creative farming solutions.

Eoin noted that the Planning Department issues the [Agency Partner Grant](#) program, which provides funding to non-profit agencies based on their ability to demonstrate they can fill a gap where an existing community need is present. Heroic Foods may be able to apply for this funding under a “workforce development (adults)” focus; Eoin will send more information to Ryan regarding this program. Ryan also mentioned that Heroic Foods may partner with Mental Health America (MHA) of Dutchess County to further their mission. Eoin requested that Ryan send a pdf of his presentation to share with all members of the group.

Dr. Mark Condon suggested that he and Ryan speak regarding their efforts to forward agricultural education/veteran support in the county, and also any potential support that DCC may be able to provide for Heroic Foods.

Agriculture Navigator Updates

Jen handed out a listing of the tasks that she has been working on since March (attached). Highlights include:

- Jen met with the DC BOCES Supervisor, Legislator Gregg Pulver, and Eoin to discuss plans for future agricultural programming.
- Jen attended a Lunch and Learn Digital Marketing session and based off of the information from this session, she started a Dutchess County agricultural Instagram account (ag_navigator, linked to the “Dutchess County Agriculture...It’s a Growing Thing!” Facebook page).
- Related to their new agritourism venue, Jen visited Hudson Valley Cold Pressed Oils, which is a farm operation growing and producing cold pressed sunflower oil and eventually sunflower flour.
- Ruth Moore (Executive Director of Cornell Cooperative Extension Dutchess County) spoke about solar panel usage in Dutchess County at one her attorney’s groups in Albany, using Northwind Farms in Tivoli as an example. Jen coordinated a visit with Ruth to visit the farm and get more information on their solar operation.
- Stephanie and Jen worked with American Farmland Trust to add Dutchess County to the Hudson Valley Farmlink program.
- Jen attempted to host a meeting with local agricultural teachers on May 12th, but was unable to get as many attendees as desired. She will try to coordinate another meeting in the fall, as there is immense support for a concerted effort of this nature. Jen also mentioned that she attended an event at the Hawk Meadow Montessori school to celebrate their new agricultural education program for younger students.
- Jen underlined the importance of reporting storm damage after severe weather to the Farm Service Agency (FSA) to receive emergency funds (before any other local entities/governments are contacted).
- Jen noted that they did not get the seed money for the Lamb Challenge, but she and May Kay Vrba (Dutchess County Tourism) are working to have the event anyways.
- Jen is continuing to update the “Dutchess County Agriculture...It’s a Growing Thing!” Facebook page. Currently, the page has 302 “likes”/followers. The Farm and Ag Report is now on two stations every morning 5 days/week (both AM and FM radio (WKIP and WRWD, respectively)).

Ag Forum Speaker Selection

The group discussed the upcoming annual Agricultural Advisory Committee forum in August, including potential topics and speakers:

- There is consensus in the group that a presentation from a practitioner would be most valuable. Ideally, the practitioner would discuss the struggles and successes associated with being a younger farmer and a farm business, and especially overcoming barriers with respect to local government regulation. This topic would tie into the fall training sessions (which would hopefully be announced at the forum), focused on the results from the Audit of Zoning Codes and Comprehensive Plans.
- In Harry’s absence, Shelby shared his speaker suggestion with the group: Sandie Prokop works for the New York Farm Bureau Education Foundation, is a large dairy farmer in Schoharie County, and is a very energetic/motivational speaker. The group discussed that her focus for the presentation could be agricultural education.
- Leon suggested Faith Gilbert as a potential speaker from Letterbox Farm, which is a diversified farm in Ulster County with animals, vegetables, and a CSA operation. He also has a few other young farmers in mind that he will contact. Leon will reach out to Faith (and others) and will follow up with the group.
- Jen also mentioned that there may not be an abundance of farmers in the stands, but the forum is broadcast throughout the entire fairgrounds and many farmers will be listening to the presentation on the loudspeaker.

Agricultural Education

The group discussed continuing to forward agricultural education in the county, tying together a pathway for new, young farmers and identifying gaps in the current system. It was discussed that next year’s Ag Forum speaker may focus on this topic.

Ag Inventory of Resources

Shelby noted that the Ag Inventory of Resources has been finalized and will be on the [website](#) soon. The County is doing

a “plain language” update on each department’s webpage, which entails organizing material into subject-specific (versus department-specific) categories.

Audit of Comprehensive Plans and Zoning Codes

The Audit of Comprehensive Plans and Zoning Codes has been completed as well. The “maybe” categories have been reviewed and updated as necessary, and the audit statistics have also been updated based on these changes. Our next steps include a tech memo which will summarize/describe the barriers to agriculture identified by the audit, as well as training sessions (through the DC Planning Federation) which will demonstrate model ordinances/practices to be “farm friendly,” and the ways to implement them.

Open Discussion

Shelby mentioned that we created a [Dutchess County Agricultural & Farmland Protection Board webpage](#) (on the Planning Department’s webpage) which will be live this week.

Mark discussed the [NYS Grown & Certified program](#) and announced that Mark Adams Greenhouse, Inc. was the first greenhouse/nursery in New York State to be designated as “NYS Grown and Certified.” Stephanie added that there will be some state monies available soon for producers who would like to become a part of this program, focused on “GAPS” (Good Agricultural Practices) training to make improvements to their farms. The NYS Grown & Certified program has expanded to cover many different types of agriculture, including beef. Eoin requested that Mark send a little blurb on this program to him for the Th!nk Dutchess Twitter feed.

Next Meeting

The next meeting will be the Dutchess County Agriculture Advisory Committee Forum on **Thursday, August 23rd at 8:00 a.m. at the Dutchess County Fairgrounds.**

Meeting adjourned at 11:32 a.m.

Respectfully submitted:

Shelby Frangk, Planner

Dutchess County Planning and Development