

Town of Caroline Planning Board
Minutes, 1/20/20

Present: Charles Eldermire, Katherine Goldberg-Forrest, Tim Murray, Bill Podulka, Val Warke
Guests: Monika Roth (CCE), Osamu Tsuda (CCE)

Meeting began at 6:30 pm.

1. Monika Roth discussed Ag District boundaries in Caroline. Ag Districts are reviewed every eight years; the review is the only time it is possible to remove a property from an ag district. Properties are removed when they are no longer suitable for farming, typically because the land has been developed. The Boiceville development is one area that might get removed—Monika will look at it and see if that seems like the right thing to do. CCE's recommendations are passed on to the county for review and finally to the state.

Farming properties in ag districts benefit from rebates from the state; in addition, the state Right to Farm law provides some protection to properties in an ag district. The town could pass a town-level Right to Farm law that would extend those protections to properties even if they are not in an ag district.

The county ARFA (Agricultural Resource Focus Area) document is not likely to be revised any time soon. ARFA's don't have any legal clout, but do provide guidance to any efforts to protect farmland if any money ever becomes available for doing that.

2. Osamu Tsuda is preparing a "Climate Vulnerability Assessment" for Caroline; currently he is meeting with various groups (us, Watershed Committee, highway dept., etc.) to get local input on what areas in Caroline might be vulnerable to extreme weather events that will become more frequent due to climate change. Examples of such weather events: floods, drought, heat waves, intense snowfalls, wind storms.

Timeline calls for a public outreach session in March; Tim suggested that the outreach session should occur sometime after the Planning Board has held the public hearings on the updated Comprehensive Plan.

We decided to add wording to the Comp Plan (in the Environmental Protection and Natural Resources section) supporting resiliency planning.

Vulnerable areas discussed (mostly related to flooding issues):

Six-Mile Creek corridor

Bridge crossings, bridge abutments

Culverts under roads

Any roads that run along streams in the bottoms of our valleys

Basement flooding caused by rising groundwater levels

Effect of heat waves on the elderly (and often poor) members of our rural population

Snow drifts on roads

Communication—particularly given the lack of good cell coverage and Internet service and that phone lines are not “hardened” (typically not buried but strung on poles).

Osamu requested that we attend the public outreach session.

3. Planning Board meeting schedule for the spring.

Tuesday, February 18th

Tuesday, March 17th

Tuesday, April 21st

Tuesday, May 26th

All meetings at 6:00 pm.

4. Val (who’s current term has expired) has agreed to be reappointed to another 5-year term. Charles (who’s current term expired some time ago) will continue another 4 weeks or so, enough to complete working on the Livability section of the Comp Plan.

Adjourn at 8:00 pm.