

## **Caroline Agriculture Committee Meeting Minutes of February 20, 2022**

The Caroline Agriculture Committee meeting was held in person at 262 Harford Road on February 20, 2022 beginning at 2:00 p.m.

### **Attendance:**

Liaison to Agriculture Committee, Councilmember Katherine Goldberg  
Agriculture Committee member Don Barber  
Agriculture Committee member Andrew Dygert  
Agriculture Committee member Caleb Scott  
Community member Pete Hoyt  
Community member Matt Mix  
Community member Nancy Munkenbeck  
Community member Jonathan Snow

### **Recording Secretary:**

Councilmember Katherine Goldberg

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### **Group philosophy, purpose, goals**

Liaison role emphasized as supportive rather than determinative of group's direction. Priority is to reduce barriers to participation, provide a space for discussion of Agricultural issues, and amplify Agricultural interests in matters related to town governance. Interest in becoming a member of the Agriculture Committee may be expressed via brief email to Town Clerk; however, "membership" in the committee is not required for participation. Group is advisory to the Town Board; there is no minimum number of members; minutes will be taken. Informal discourse is encouraged, i.e. Robert's Rules of Order need not apply at this time.

The initial charge to committee via Town Board resolution was outlined; it is not specific.

Resolution re. purpose of the committee states: *"Investigate and recommend measures to support local agriculture & food justice issues"*

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### **Discussion regarding "food justice"**

What is food justice? What is food sovereignty?

Various elements, i.e. slaughter, food distribution, food safety, direct sale to consumer, underrepresented minority groups in agriculture.

Also discussed the history of food justice concerns in Caroline, related to formation of this committee and presentation of a petition to Town Board related to the same; discussed Maine law exempting local producers from state and local regulation related to sale.

Discussed current law related to sale of live animals and regulation, existing Ag & Markets law, different rules by species in terms of on-farm processing and consumer purchase of whole animals. Discussed possible exemption of producers from state and federal regulation, associated challenges; interplay between local, state and federal regulation. Discussed Ag & Markets v. USDA v. local health department regulations; rules related to slaughter and point of sale, custom cutting and potential grey areas related to regulations, purchasing whole animals for processing without customer owning prior to slaughter.

Discussed process of complaints, enforcement related to whether neighbors are concerned.

USDA enforcement requires USDA employee presence, assure that livestock are ambulatory.

Discussed custom processing days at USDA certified facilities; USDA facilities are overwhelmed.

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### **Discussion regarding Commissary Kitchen**

What are the types of activities which local jurisdiction around food production might impact?

Discussion regarding home processed baked good, jams/jellies, there are some grey areas of leniency re. home kitchen versus commercial kitchen; commissary kitchen.

Information was shared related to commissary kitchens; would this be a resource for our community?

Instead of going into Ithaca, would that be something that Caroline would be interested in? "Food Justice" approach might say, why control home bakery operations at all?

*Action Item: Find out whether Brooktondale Community Center kitchen is considered a commercial kitchen. Learn more about commissary kitchens.*

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### **Discussion regarding Agriculture Committee and Zoning**

Initial discussion point about what type/how much involvement this committee will have related to zoning; discuss that while zoning is a current issue with relevance to agricultural issues and potential contributions from this group, zoning was not the impetus for formation of this group, and definitely not the only/primary issue, even as work on zoning is currently underway. Agriculture Committee work will continue in the Town, with or without zoning.

Items of importance for zoning and agricultural interests were outlined, including the following:

- Ag district boundaries
- utilizing updated maps
- soil designations and drainage practices
- potential overlay district for zoning commission - "agricultural", "farming", other
- Ag & Markets review of zoning law
- general concern about municipal leadership expressing interest in "supporting agriculture" but not really understanding the true impacts of local regulations

Concerns related to current zoning draft law were raised (height/size of buildings, odor, lighting, glare, noise); importance of assuring consistency with laws already in place, including Right to Farm Law was noted.

*Action Item: Review Caroline's Right To Farm Law.*

Discussed realistic risks to agriculture - what will the Town lose farming to? Suburban sprawl versus commercial development? Discussed conflict between housing & farming, related to soil types and location (along Route 79 corridor). Emphasized importance of providing feedback to shape the potential zoning law currently under discussion; those who are engaged in agriculture and understand the community are best positioned to provide realistic feedback.

Zoning document is just a draft; this committee can make recommendations to the zoning commission and provide a formal presentation if desired. There's no indication of interest in restricting agriculture with zoning, but there are important issues to discuss so that agricultural interests are actually being supported - the group can help with this.

The biggest zoning issue might be an interest in keeping commercial businesses out, which would have unintended consequences for agriculture - need to consider the support businesses - fertilizer, fuel, Ag plastic, lumber, equipment, etc. Discussed impact of restrictive commercial zoning on agriculture.

*Action Item: Provide specific feedback to zoning commission on draft document(s); discuss whether to do this individually and/or as a group.*

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**Discussion regarding agricultural definitions and changing agricultural practices within the Town**

What is a "farmer" vs. "agriculture", and whether or not it matters if parcels/farms/homesteads are income-producing. Commercial farming is "dead" in the Town of Caroline; what else is the group interested in supporting, and how to do that. Discussed smaller sized farms, some with their own equipment to harvest and some which hire out. Discussed how to classify agricultural properties - land type, location, other. What can be done on smaller parcels? Significance (or not) of agricultural assessment; how to define "agriculture" within the Town.

History provided related to farming and farm families in the Town, forested and unforested areas, acknowledgement of the large shifts in agriculture within the town; issue of how to maintain "farmland" without farmers, since nature will step in and change the landscape rapidly.

Discussed whether/how to help people to go from small startup to midsize operations, how to support the "little guys". Importance of market opportunities, discussed Regional Access proximity in Trumansburg as an example.

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**NEXT MEETING:**

**Sunday, March 13, 2 PM at 262 Harford Road, Scott Family Hall**

*Action Item: Determine process for zoom +/- recording*

**Additional meetings of interest:**

**Zoning Commission, Tuesday, 2/22, 7:15 PM (Town Hall & Zoom)**

**Town Board, Wednesday, 3/2, 7:00 PM (Town Hall & Zoom)**

*Action Item: Share this information and invite others to join the conversation. All are welcome!*

---Adjourn---

Respectfully submitted,  
Katherine J. Goldberg