

Caroline Agriculture Committee Meeting Minutes of May 5, 2022

The Caroline Agriculture Committee meeting was held in person at the Caroline Town Hall at 7 pm
A zoom link was open; no attendees joined via zoom

Attendance:

Liaison to Agriculture Committee, Councilmember Katherine Goldberg
Agriculture Committee Chair Andrew Dygert
Agriculture Committee member Don Barber
Agriculture Committee member Matt Mix
Agriculture Committee member Tony Tavelli
Agriculture Committee member Caleb Scott
Agriculture Committee member Pete Hoyt
Agriculture Committee member Emily Adams
Community member Hannah Wyllie
Community member Wil Lawrence

Recording Secretary:

Councilmember Katherine Goldberg

Agenda & Discussion

- 1) interface with town board, suggest discussion about what that might look like
- 2) define "farming"/agriculture in the town

Started with second agenda item above: discussed what kind of protections the Ag community in Caroline would be seeking. Consider "protections" versus "incentives" versus other means of broadly supporting agricultural pursuits. Example of home scale food production was provided.

It is noted that the town cannot provide protection to farmers; protection comes from state and county. However, potential ban of nuisance suits in town law would inherently protect agricultural activities.

Discussed Right to Farm Law as potential means of refining and redefining "Agriculture" in the town; this committee has an opportunity to craft it to meet current needs and goals.

Some committee members ask whether it needs to be addressed at all - identified various levels of regulation and supports to Ag: state, county, Ag & markets law, Ag assessment*

*note that most Ag parcels in Caroline do not meet Ag Assessment threshold

Pete pointed out that the opinion of this group has been solicited by the zoning commission. Brief discussion regarding committee's potential role in current zoning conversation, as noted previously.

Don Barber advocated for an expanded definition of what is in Town Law for "farming"; if we expand definition of farmer - more people become farmers, this is significant for supporting Ag.

Multiple members expressed agreement in the importance of the town explicitly valuing an agricultural community - what does that look like, in terms of actionable items?

Brief discussion re. impact of agricultural property/activities in hamlet of brooktondale. What if a "new farm" were to come into a predominantly residential location? What is the role of Ag district/RTF/local law +/- zoning. Brief discussion related to animal welfare/Ag practices by species & location - cows behind the Dandy Mart, poultry in Brooktondale hamlet; emphasized that neither town leadership nor this committee has jurisdiction over specific animal husbandry practices, whether domestic/companion animal or livestock.

Re-emphasized goal of cultivating small ways to support and encourage Ag in Caroline.

Tony speaks to importance of building a network, having enough protections to know you can do it, and have a market so there is incentive to invest.

Reiterate what are the realistic Ag enterprises in Caroline - i.e. CAFO dairies will not be here

Caleb suggests a Caroline Ag Co-Op - drop off location, connect to Regional Access, etc.

Pete suggests working on RTF law, developing a website for central farm info

Discuss RTF signage - Katherine to follow up with this

Regarding interface with town board: what is the goal?

There is broad agreement that since we are talking about land use regulation in the town, the most logical way to do that is to encourage Ag in every way possible

Ideas:

- 1) Ag & land use education
- 2) stay out of the way of farming
- 3) website attractiveness
- 4) roadside attractiveness
- 5) farm directory
- 6) succession planning

Following this discussion, it is agreed that the committee is not ready to talk to town board at this time.

Don outlines current county effort to develop food system plan

Goals: resilient, local, healthy, equitable food

Project is communicating produce and markets - dashboard, real time need/have board

Next steps for Ag Committee:

- Communicate on Google Group re. ideas for increasing Ag presence in town, small & actionable
- Communicate on Google Group re. RTF law revision

- Consider mission/vision effort, "workshopping"
- Continue to consider role of Ag Committee related to zoning
- Continue to consider Ag-related issues aside from zoning

NEXT MEETING:

Thursday, June 2 at 7 pm @ Town Hall

---Adjourn---

Respectfully submitted,
Katherine J. Goldberg

****Additional information relevant to May 5 meeting:**

1) Of note, the Town of Danby's law related to "Right to Farm" is called "Right to Engage in Agricultural Activity" to more completely capture Ag activity which is not "farming"
http://danbyny.org/Documents/TownBoard_Law_200902.pdf

2) An additional step to consider in terms of maximizing the integration of agriculture into town planning efforts would be to have an Agriculture & Farmland Protection Plan (Dryden's is linked here as an example); to be further explored by this committee

<https://dryden.ny.us/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/DRYDEN-DRAFT-DOCUMENT-6.30.pdf>

3) related to the above, a reminder that Monika Roth presented to the town board on February 2; you may view the recording on the town website and/or request a copy of Monika's powerpoint from Katherine