

Town of Caroline
Agriculture Advisory Board
February 7, 2023
Caroline Town Hall
7 - 9:00 pm

Member Attendees: Emily Adams, Don Barber, Pete Hoyt, Wil Lawrence, Matt Mix

Additional attendees: Plan Coordinator Monika Roth, Plan Consultant George Frantz, Jonathan Bates, Anne Dygert, Nancy Munkenbeck, Greg Reynolds, Graham Savio, Town Supervisor Mark Witmer

Zoom: Town Board Liaison Katherine Goldberg, Beverly J Martin

The meeting agenda was distributed to the “Caroline Ag” google group in Ms. Frenay's February 4 email, followed by hand-outs in Ms. Roth's January 12 email.

Introductions

The meeting began with a round of introductions by attendees.

Overview of conversion analysis

Mr. Frantz briefly described land use conversion analysis as a way to expand upon work done for the town’s comprehensive plan by going back as far as satellite images from the 1990’s. He clarified that he is looking at development pressure and abandonment, as was previously done for the Town of Newfield. Mr. Frantz distinguished inactive ag land that is lying fallow from abandoned ag land that typically becomes shrubby after five years. He pointed out that working with electronic maps allows him to zoom in to see a high level of detail. Some discussion followed about the appropriate uses of GoogleEarth and ArcGIS. The plan to do a “windshield survey” with Mr. Hoyt as the driver was reiterated, with

Mr. Frantz explaining that on-the-ground observation adds valuable information about farming and land use.

Mr. Frantz outlined his upcoming review of local laws including the right to farm law, the draft zoning law, and the solar siting law. Mr. Barber voiced the committee's desire that the plan include recommendations so that actions would be taken once the plan was final, as opposed to "just sitting on the shelf." Mses. Roth and Frenay reiterated the group's previously discussed desire to broaden the definition of agriculture (including homesteading, for example) and to address food sovereignty in plan development. Mr. Reynolds commented that the state's too-narrow definitions do not classify buildings used in beekeeping as farm buildings. Mr. Witmer reported that Jeff Kehoe of the state's ag department is willing to participate in an ag committee meeting.

Mr. Frantz explained his usages of "farm" as a physical property (that a farmer may or may not own) and of "agriculture" as a land use. He emphasized that having a written and approved ag plan is valuable for future support, including grants.

April 6 outreach event

Ms. Roth distributed and reviewed a draft outline of the upcoming April event for committee discussion. Mr. Hoyt and Mses Adams and Dygert volunteered as a sub-group to work outside of our monthly meetings on menu and food prep for the April event; Mses. Adams and Lawrence volunteered to take care of publicity. Reservations, agenda preparation, event promotion, online RSVPs, and focus group topics were discussed among the group. Ms. Roth emphasized the importance of asking local farmers what they see as the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats for ag in Caroline ("SWOT analysis") and entertained suggestions for possible focus group topics. The possible use of maps was also discussed. And, Ms. Roth suggested that the Ag Committee vision

statement could be put out on a “scribble board” where event attendees could write comments about the statement.

Test of ag survey

Meeting attendees tested a draft survey, both paper and electronic versions, generally taking 15-20 minutes to complete. Suggested revisions were directed to Mses. Roth and Frenay for a new draft to likely be tested at the March meeting.

The next committee meeting is planned for Thursday, March 9, at 7 pm, in the town hall.

Respectfully submitted,

Wil Lawrence

Ad hoc Secretary

Current recipients of carolineag@googlegroups.com: Emily Adams, Don Barber, Jonathan Bates, Erica Frenay, Katherine Goldberg, Pete Hoyt, Wil Lawrence, Kathie Mix (for Matt Mix), Greg Reynolds, Anne Riordan Dygert, Monika Roth, Graham Savio, Cal Snow