

Town of Caroline
Agriculture Advisory Board
January 12, 2023
Caroline Town Hall
7 - 8:30 pm

Member Attendees: Town Board Liaison Katherine Goldberg, Members Emily Adams, Pete Hoyt, Wil Lawrence, Matt Mix

Additional attendees: Plan Coordinator Monika Roth, Jonathan Bates, Ken Miller, Greg Reynolds, Cal Snow, Mark Witmer

The meeting agenda was distributed to the "Caroline Ag" google group in Ms. Frenay's January 5 email, followed by hand-outs in Ms. Roth's January 12 email.

Introductions

Non-member attendees were welcomed and invited to fully participate in the meeting discussions. It was clarified that all of the current committee members became members through a resolution passed by the Town Board.

Announcements from members

Mr. Barber passed around a copy of "The Town That Food Saved--How One Community Found Vitality in Local Food," as recommended reading.

Work plan

Ms. Roth suggested that a work plan would be more meaningful after the current information-gathering phase and after the upcoming community meeting. The purpose of the community meeting will be to elicit details regarding current and future agricultural activity from people who farm in our town.

Meanwhile, it was confirmed that the Town Board approved a resolution for Ms. Roth's contract as the plan development coordinator. An additional town board resolution to approve a proposed review by Mr. George Frantz will be forthcoming from Ms. Goldberg. Mr. Frantz has specifically developed a "toolbox" for farmland protection, and his proposal will cover New York State requirements for

- an assessment of development pressure on ag land,
- a policy analysis of local laws (right to farm, zoning, and others),
- an overview of the current community ag activity ("windshield survey"), and
- recommendations (especially with respect to priority or target areas for farmland protection).

Mr. Hoyt volunteered to drive Mr. Frantz around for the overview. It was noted that Mr. Frantz' students might be willing to assist the committee with some of the work for the plan. It was also noted that the county is currently reviewing the shifts from agricultural to residential uses of land using 2018 data. The group suggested that we would want to identify land that was previously used for

agriculture but is no longer being farmed for reasons other than residential development.

During discussion, Mr. Miller suggested that there may be loans or grants available for farmers through Farm Credit in Cortland and several state agencies. Mr. Reynolds opined that he would like to see "farm and land protection" as distinct from "farmland protection." He provided an illustration of valuation of land for the purposes of bank credit based on the difference between land valued as possible future residences versus possible future agriculture. Mr. Miller suggested that the town could consider a way to help people to maintain open space, possibly with a stipend.

Planning for community outreach meeting

Ms. Roth distributed a couple pages of considerations for the community meeting format and content along with a second hand-out of a draft survey for the meeting attendees. It was decided to plan for an evening potluck dinner at the Brooktondale Community Center on Thursday, February 7, starting at 6:30, with as much local food as possible. Ms. Adams reserved the room online during the meeting. The general feeling was to invite "everyone" rather than particular groups of people. "Everyone" would include a wide range of people engaged in agricultural activity and not just large farm owners or landowners. The group discussed how they might be more effective with publicity by personally inviting people. Along those lines, Ms. Goldberg

volunteered to contact horse owners, and Emily suggested invitation language emphasizing, “we want your opinion.” There was discussion of having a panel of speakers who could spark thoughts about specific topics to be covered in the survey, followed by a break-out to smaller intensive discussion groups ("charettes") for some of the survey questions.

Suggestions regarding the survey were noted, many of them regarding land ownership language and meaningful ways that people are likely to describe their farming activity/operation. There were specific suggestions to include: asking where one's products are marketed and sold, what products are produced (including value-added products), which butchers are used, whether one has access to a cannery or Article V or USDA facility, possession of a 20-C license, whether operation is part-time, full-time, geared to breaking even or turning a profit or paying taxes, had non-farm income or insurance, and whether the land had ponds with fish. How farmers can work together to save money, increase revenue and share resources was also indicated during discussion as a good question for the survey. Ms. Lawrence reported that she had done some unofficial surveying at a potluck and local eatery and was invited to help revise the survey. Mses. Roth, Frenay and Lawrence will rework the survey, based on feedback, for the February 7 meeting.

An enthusiastic discussion about haying started spontaneously, but time ran out, perhaps pointing to a

high level of interest in getting people together to improve local hay production.

The group will meet on February 7 at 7 pm in the town hall (on a TUESDAY--not Thursday--to accommodate prior commitments).

Respectfully submitted,

Wil Lawrence

Ad hoc Secretary

Current recipients of carolineag@googlegroups.com: Emily Adams, Andrew Dygert, Anne Riordan, Brandon Hunt, Bob Tour, Cal Snow, Don Barber, Elissa Palmer, Jonathan Bates, Greg Reynolds, Hayden Stebbins, Hannah Wyllie, Erica Frenay, Katherine Goldberg, Pete Hoyt, Kathie Mix (for Matt Mix), Nancy Munkenback, Caleb Scott, Tony Tavelli, Wil Lawrence, Monika Roth.