

Dryden Agriculture Advisory Committee

April 11, 2018

Members Present: Evan Carpenter (Chair), Kim LaMotte, Brian Magee, Steve Foote, Marie McRae, and Jeremy Sherman

Liaisons: Craig Schutt

Guests: Tyler Beck, Debbie Teeter

E. Carpenter called the meeting to order at 7:35 PM.

E. Carpenter asked if everyone had reviewed the minutes from the last meetings. The answer was yes. K. LaMotte made a motion to accept the minutes as presented, S. Foote seconded the motion and it was passed unanimously.

E. Carpenter asked if anyone wanted to go over the "Agriculture and Farmland Protection Plan" that was adopted last month by the Town Board. It was agreed that they had nothing further to discuss on the issue at this time.

D. Teeter suggested that from now on an agenda should be provided for each meeting; old business and new business. She also requested an e-mail be sent the week before a scheduled meeting as a reminder with an attached agenda or an e-mail be sent the week before that there will be no meeting.

Also, she said that two items that were brought up some time ago are the bi-laws and right-to-farm signs. And perhaps they need to look at zoning. C. Schutt said that the Cornell students were at the last meeting and spoke about that and are researching the issue. E. Carpenter said they'd had quite a good discussion; they seemed to be on board with everything; they'd met with R. Burger earlier today and had spoken with him about the issues. He'd hoped they'd be here tonight with an update. K. LaMotte said there was an e-mail from Monica Roth that they wouldn't be here. D. Teeter said that Monica has officially retired, but probably will be at the meeting next month. Since Cornell graduation is the end of next month a special meeting might be necessary.

D. Teeter brought up the subject of bylaws. E. Carpenter said that he remembers they had worked on bylaws when the committee first got together. When the "Friends of the Farm" group that pushed to get this committee going five to six years ago we came up with some ideas regarding the way we wanted the committee set up. He's sure they had something written up as to what qualifications they were looking for in members of the committee. It was decided that they need to locate what they've already done, and look at the two sample bylaws D. Teeter e-mailed and maybe merge them together where appropriate. Since this document was being

worked on before the “Agriculture Committee” was officially recognized by the Town, it might be difficult locating the information.

D. Teeter said that the “Right to Farm” town signs, when it was presented before, that there didn’t seem to be any objections to this. She asked about the status of this. K. LaMotte said that it had been mentioned to the Supervisor and he didn’t feel there would be a problem, but that was as far as it went. They talked about sign placement, what roads they felt the signs should be displayed on, and budgeting. S. Foote said he’d speak with the Highway Superintendent to find out what needs to be done to get the signs made and put up. The Highway Department would probably have a good idea of where the signs should be placed.

D. Teeter brought up the “Priority Recommendations” listed on page 8 of the Ag Plan. C. Schutt said that after hearing the Ag and Markets presentation they recommended that if you have an Ag Plan you should get your town to incorporate it into the Comprehensive Plan one way or another. D. Teeter asked if the Town was updating their Comprehensive Plan and the answer was no. K. LaMotte said it could be suggested that when they do update the Comprehensive Plan the Ag Plan could be incorporated then. C. Schutt said it could be referenced in the Comprehensive Plan. K. LaMotte asked what the procedure is for us to put something like that to them. D. Teeter said a resolution should be written. A resolution will be drafted for approval at the next meeting. C. Schutt said he’s going to suggest that the Conservation Board do the same thing for the just recently adopted Natural Resources Plan.

C. Schutt suggested that the group start working on updating the definitions in the plan. D. Teeter said that probably anything that you think is good, and not controversial with anyone, should be run by the Planning Board before proceeding.

D. Teeter asked if the solar proposal will come before this Committee for comment. E. Carpenter said probably not since it was approved at the last Town Board meeting. K. LaMotte said that the Committee had recommended it be directed away from prime agricultural soils. The recommendation was directed at land owners; farmers aren’t going to put solar panels on their best ground. E. Carpenter said where the solar project is going on his land is not the best ground. He said where they were boring test holes on the ground where the site is proposed they realized how hard and water sogged the ground is where the solar is going. If you go 100’ in any direction and it becomes gravelly again. D. Teeter suggested if anyone has questions about this they ask E. Carpenter about it because you may be asked about it from residents; they saw in this plan the soil map listing good soils and then a farmer put up a solar array. Everyone should feel comfortable about answering questions and not guess about it. S. Foote asked if the land the solar project is going on is identified on the soil maps as lower grade. E. Carpenter said that soil “class” kind of goes from there all the way over to Yellow Barn Road and beyond. It depends on where the glacial shore was to have the flat washed rocks, deep gravel and a little farther up you have the silt.

M. McRae presented to the committee a letter she'd composed to Richard A. Ball, Commissioner of Agriculture and Markets. At the Ag Forum she'd attended, one of the speakers, Mr. Saviola, stated that large solar arrays shouldn't go on prime Ag land. She agreed with that and asked him what he was doing to ask the Public Service Commission and the utilities to put in more interconnection points so that it's possible to site solar on "marginal lands". He said that's not his thing to do, so she drafted the letter to Commissioner Ball asking if AG & Markets has spoken with the Public Service Commission and the utilities regarding putting in more interconnection points so that it's possible to site solar on "marginal lands". She wanted to know if the Committee supported the letter and if they'd like to sign the letter, along with her. It was suggested that the Committee could formally send a letter. The Committee reviewed the letter and discussed some of the points brought up in the letter. D. Teeter said they could ask the Town Board and the Planning Board to write and send a similar letter, also. She also suggested the committee send their letter to the Ag Committees in Ulysses, Lansing and Ithaca and request they do the same thing. She also suggested giving it to the Farm Bureau. M. McRae said she felt having one letter from the Farm Bureau wouldn't have the impact that having multiple Boards and Committees submit a letter would have. D. Teeter said she meant the County Farm Bureaus in addition to sending to the other locations. She said the way Farm Bureau policy is determined is grass roots, so the State Farm Bureau does whatever the County Farm Bureaus tell it to do in the October meeting. In the meantime, Tompkins County Farm Bureau could send this out with their field staff to all of the counties. S. Foote said the flip side of that is the "marginal lands" seem to be somewhat protected, the wet land areas and like that, so it's an uphill battle to put anything in there too. M. McRae is going to make some changes in the letter per tonight's discussion and bring it back next month for the Committee to review and hopefully submit. D. Teeter stated that a possible problem is the northeast is a "net carbon gain". For some people that's a real hot issue, so perhaps that's an issue with Ag & Markets. She said they've had people coming in trying to get traction on carbon farming in this area. What we've heard is the area is so wet, forested and covered that we're not like other parts of the country where there is arid land and water problems. S. Foote asked who owns the "carbon credits". D. Teeter said the person who owns the land owns the carbon credit. M. McRae said there is a bill that's been introduced to the State Assembly and Senate to give farmers carbon credits. K. LaMotte asked what you do when you have this credit. D. Teeter said you can use it for tax purposes.

M. McRae distributed a copy of a bill that's been introduced both in the Assembly and the Senate, but is sitting in committee right now. The bill is to change Ag & Markets law. She looked over the complete proposed bill and took out what she considered to be important. This act will be known as "Carbon Farming Act". The intent of this legislature and the purpose of this act is to encourage farmers to further sequester and mitigate carbon in this state by establishing carbon farming tax credit. This is to reward and incentivize farmers to maintain or adopt practices that help maximize New York's carbon sequestration potential. She felt the Committee should be aware of legislation that is being proposed in Albany. If the Committee wants to support it we could write a letter of thanks to Barbara Lifton who is a co-sponsor of the bill in the Assembly. D. Teeter asked if this was proposed by Ag & Markets. M. McRae said

no, that it's proposed by an Assemblyman. D. Teeter said she'd check with Farm Bureau and Ag & Markets and get more information on this for the next meeting.

D. Teeter suggested they look at some of the zoning definitions; the conclusions are listed on page 41. C. Schutt said starting on page 34 is the list of identified issues. After looking over the information it was decided that Section C should be reviewed and work on the definitions with the Planning Board. C. Schutt said this Committee needs to come up with something they're comfortable with and then take it to the Planning Board. The Committee discussed several of the items and it was decided that some need more clarification. D. Teeter is going to pull together the items they've discussed and create a document for next month's meeting with items they'd like to work with the Planning Board on.

M. McRae made a motion to adjourn the meeting, K. LaMotte seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:45 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Diane Michaud
Deputy Town Clerk