

AGRICULTURE ADVISORY COMMITTEE
March 13, 2024
In-Person

Present: Evan Carpenter (chair), Austin Beck, Kim LaMotte, Brian Magee
Absent: Steve Foote
Liaisons: Jason Leifer (Town Board), Craig Schutt (Conservation Board)
Staff: Loren Sparling (Deputy Town Clerk)

The meeting was called to order at 7:34 p.m.

Review and Approval of Minutes from November 8, 2023

On motion made by K LaMotte, seconded by A Beck, the minutes of November 8, 2023 were unanimously approved as written.

Agriculture Advisory Committee Vacancy

Doug Antczak has applied to fill the vacancy on the Agriculture Advisory Committee. E Carpenter explained that the applicant is a professor at Cornell's Vet School who specializes in horses; he also owns a small horse farm at the far end of Ringwood Rd. Those with whom he has consulted have stated that D Antczak would be a welcome addition to the Committee. J Leifer added that a resolution to appoint him to the Committee is on the agenda for tomorrow's Town Board meeting.

Regenerative Agriculture

Tim Woods, a member of the Conservation Board, has been promoting the topic of regenerative agriculture. Committee members individually were not opposed to the practice of regenerative agriculture, but as a group, were not going to favor one form of agriculture over another. A Beck warned that those who practiced regenerative agriculture would be unable to produce food on a large (mainstream) scale.

C Schutt summarized the discussions that took place on this subject at the Conservation Board meeting of 2/27/2024. At this meeting, T Woods noted that every time that soil is turned over, carbon is released into the atmosphere; the aim of regenerative agriculture is to keep carbon in the soil. C Schutt compared the technique employed by the Shermans, who are organic and make many passes on their fields for weed control, with that used by the A Beck, who practices reduced tillage.

A Beck brought attention to the amount of pasturage that the Shermans have that do not get turned up; those sequester carbon all the time and offsets the fields upon which they make their passes. He reiterated that he is fine with regenerative agriculture if everyone wants to do that but struggles to see how it can work successfully in mainstream ag today. We're not going back to grazing cows, which is essentially what regenerative agriculturalists are asking farmers to do. No-till and manure injection do not interplay.

A Beck wonders what T Woods' purpose is in pushing regenerative agriculture. Does he want communities to start community gardens? Does he want people to grow their own food? If he simply wants mainstream ag to convert, he doesn't understand mainstream ag enough.

E Carpenter again ventured that it is not the job of the Committee to promote one form of agricultural practice over another. Our job is to ensure that all agriculture is protected.

1 A Beck added that a farmer’s choice of agricultural practice depends on the land/soil
2 itself. What works in one part of Dryden might not work in another. People who believe in a
3 one-size-fits-all approach to agriculture do not understand agriculture.
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5 C Schutt related that he expressed concern over whether the Conservation Board
6 should even take up the topic of regenerative agriculture. E Carpenter offered that such a topic
7 should fall to Cooperative Extension, as they are the ones that teach farmers the different
8 options and practices.
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10 B Magee thought that the push for regenerative agriculture may be due to subsidies. A
11 Beck knew of subsidies for cover crops, but none for regenerative ag.
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13 As all were in agreement on the topic, E Carpenter ended the discussion by forcefully
14 stating that if the Conservation Board pushes the Town to enact a policy in support of
15 regenerative agriculture, the Agriculture Advisory Committee will be against it, because they
16 will not promote one specific type of farming.
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18 **Other Items**

19 *Zoning Update*

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21 J Leifer reported that the Town Board will vote this month on the selection of a
22 consultant for the zoning update.
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25 *Indian Milk & Honey Expansion*

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27 E Carpenter asked if Indian Milk & Honey (Johnson Rd) had expanded, as there was a
28 whole new building next to their old one. J Leifer responded that nothing had come before the
29 Town Board, though it may have come before the Planning Board.
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31 *Cannabis Dispensary*

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33 E Carpenter wondered about the drive-through that he had heard was planned for the
34 cannabis store going in on Dryden Rd. J Leifer said that if a drive-through was planned, it
35 would need to go before the Town Board for a Special Use Permit. He does not know what is
36 currently planned for that location, as the Planning Department has yet to bring any plans
37 forth to the Board. He continued that cannabis drive-throughs are broadly allowed via the
38 Marihuana Regulation and Taxation Act (MRTA), and until it is changed in Dryden’s zoning
39 law, it remains a possibility.
40

41 J Leifer also noted the relevance of the adult-use microbusiness license, a dispensary
42 license akin to a farm brewery license. The license requires a microbusiness to locate its retail
43 premises within a 20-mile radius of its cultivation location. From a zoning perspective,
44 greenhouses are a concern as light and smell might affect neighbors.
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46 Should a business choose to process cannabis rather than grow it, that would be a
47 separate license completely. If someone sets up a processing facility, NYS Ag and Markets
48 would consider that as light industrial. The Sherman farm was here referenced as an example,
49 as they are growing cannabis. If they establish a drying facility there only for their stuff, it
50 would be considered part of the farm; but if they start bringing in things from other farms, it
51 would be considered light industrial.
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53 Municipalities had the choice to opt out of adult-use marijuana dispensaries and/or on-
54 site consumption lounges in their jurisdiction. Even if the municipalities opted out, the
55 processing, testing, and farming of cannabis could still occur within their boundaries.

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Alliance for New York's Farmland

J Leifer relayed that he receives emails from the Alliance for New York's Farmland and asked if Committee members would be interested in receiving such emails. The organization tries to get towns to lobby for the ag industry. Members responded that they would be interested in any forwarded emails that J Leifer thought relevant.

There being no further business, on motion made by B Magee and seconded by K LaMotte, the meeting was adjourned at 8:19 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Loren Sparling
Deputy Town Clerk