

Town of Red Hook

**Agriculture and Open Space Committee**

**Minutes of September 26, 2011**

**Attendance:** Co-chairperson Pete Hubbell, Mary Ann Johnson, Marina Michahelles, and Michael Grady Robertson, Secretary Linda Keeling,

**Absent:** Co-chairperson Norman Greig, Richard Biezynski, James Stagias, Ken Migliorelli

**Guests:** Town Board Councilman William O’Neill (liaison), Arvine (Bucky) Coon, Rich Hansen

**Meeting Opened:** Co-Chairperson Hubbell opened the meeting at 7:08 pm. Members reviewed the 7-25 draft minutes but being there was not a quorum a vote could not be taken.

Regarding the 7-25 draft minutes: Correction noted on page 2, under Kalina Farm: add “in part” after negate. It was also noted that the petitions regarding the ABD and TND are no longer applicable. Mary Ann Johnson suggested tabling the draft minutes to next month as there is not a quorum. It would take 5 members to vote.

Marina Michahelles questioned how the minutes get posted as her first minutes are not posted. Linda Keeling explained the process and suggested Marina send the digital file to the town clerk Sue McCann so that Richard Wambach can post it.

As an aside, it was noted that Northwind Farms received a solar grant for \$48,000. All were pleased with this news.

**Discussions:**

**1. OPAV Vermont Experience:** Marina Michahelles tried again to get in contact with Alex Wiley as to a potential panel discussion, presentation or Question and Answer session. Chairperson Hubbell will get in contact with her.

**2. Kalina Farm:** Chairperson Hubbell talked with Cary Watkins Bates and she has talked with the family. There are still some issues that need to be resolved before it goes further.

**3. Resignation of Lindsey Shute:** Chairperson Hubbell referred to the resignation letter send by Lindsey Shute leaving a position open. He contacted Chuck Mead and he declined. Other names were mentioned: Dave Fraleigh, Adam Fincke. It was felt that Agricultural interests should be the focus of another member but Open Space is also a consideration of the group so as long as

there is an interest in the group's mission, the Committee would entertain an application from even a non-farmer.

**4. Future of the Committee:** Chairperson Hubbell personally supports commercial agricultural enterprises in the town. In order to keep agriculture vibrant, marketing is a consideration as well as a possible reuse of an unused facility. He noted Sam Simon's branding model of Hudson Valley Fresh and the Boice Brothers Dairy. Chairperson Hubbell suggested the group might want to develop a branding for Red Hook products perhaps through a grant.

**5. Parker Product Distribution Model:** Mary Ann Johnson mentioned Rod Parker of Parker Farms in which shipping was consolidated to a shipping point offering the best quality product. It is owned and run by the farmers whereby based on the quality of their product, they are guaranteed a price. They received the financial support of state government grants for their facility and truck purchases. Their primary market extends to Washington D.C. from Virginia and includes restaurants, a market difficult for the small farmer to embrace. Cooperative adventures have their ups and downs and disagreements but it is possible if they can be worked out.

Mary Ann Johnson noted that the federal grant's timeline and potential are somewhat fleeting currently with this economy. She noted that the Hudson Valley Agricultural Business is a not-for-profit so an application could be run through them. A feasibility study would need to be done first and would be dependent on multiple farmers' participation, otherwise it won't work. The Parker project is a successful model that can have parts extracted and worked into a Red Hook model.

Chairperson Hubbell suggested waiting until Ken Migliorelli returns for his input as he was previously involved in a Livingston cooperative in the 1980's and he is presently one of the biggest growers in Red Hook utilizing self-promotion branding techniques.

Michael Grady Robertson of Grady's Farm is interested in the concept. He is not sure what the future is for this Committee and its structuring. He felt his personal farm product marketing was not good for him this year.

Mary Ann Johnson noted due to the hurricane flooding this year, it opened a market to other farmers in Dutchess County to supply farm product (corn, hay and pumpkins) to Ulster County just so they could keep their farm stands open.

Marina Michahelles felt the Virginia model is important for having a medium to large farm involved for their bulk which could cause the pricing to be fairer for even the smaller producer as there would be a guaranteed market. She gave an example of "piggy-backing" on Hearty Roots which would provide a broader spectrum of possibilities for agriculture involving the small farmer for whom shipping to NYC would not be economical.

Chairperson Hubbell suggested this type of modeling could encourage the resale of farmland and the clearing of new fields which could go beyond Red Hook. There is a need to protect the farmers and the need for profitability. This in turn helps the town's economic opportunities. We still need to contact the EDC for discussions and working together.

Mary Ann Johnson informed Chairperson Hubbell that as the former Chairperson, the town budget forms were mistakenly sent to her.

Marina had to leave at 7:40 pm.

Chairperson Hubbell would love to see the Parker model if he could get to Virginia. He suggested that perhaps a grant could provide a field trip experience for the Committee through a grant request. He inquired if Linda Keeling could write a grant. She indicated it was a possibility if paid by the town. Chairperson Hubbell inquired how that is done and wanted to know her success rate. Linda Keeling explained depending on the amount of work involved she gives a price and she has been extremely successful over the years. She recently attained two grants for the Red Hook town government: \$50,000 for the Centers and Greenspaces and \$15,000 for the Tree Commission.

**6. Guest Arvine (Bucky) Coon:** Chairperson Hubbell invited Bucky Coon to the meeting as he wanted to ensure Bucky of the Committee's support for his agriculture site plan project opposite the Hannaford entrance. Bucky suggested that the AOSC should be part of the planning of agriculture and open space proposals especially when they come before the ZBA or the town board. His proposal, although taking longer than expected, should go through as all of the paperwork has been submitted to the attorney for the town, Christine Chale. Chairperson Hubbell felt this Committee should support agricultural applications and be an advocate for them in the future.

Bill O'Neill explained that it started with the Agricultural District. The AOSC looked at farms and listed the farms qualifying. The town board tried to make it easier to get into the Ag District without having to go through the AOSC but he is open to having this Committee be part of the application process.

Mary Ann Johnson felt that the AOSC should be part of the application process so that applicants know the Committee exists and supports agricultural ventures.

Chairperson Hubbell said James Stagias wanted to tweak the ABD.

Bucky Coons suggested the AOSC be added to the application check list.

Mary Ann Johnson suggested that coming to the AOSC be optional as we are not a Board. We don't want to be an interference but just offer help if desired by the applicant.

Chairperson Hubbell will speak with Steve Cole, ZEO, about what can be done. Mary Ann Johnson volunteered to work with him on the issue.

Bill O'Neill handed out the Criteria on the ABD which is about 6 years old.

Chairperson Hubbell feels that the AOSC should not be ignored. However, The AOSC wants to be a resource for the applicant but doesn't want to be in the way for anyone wanting to fast tracking into the ABD.

Chairperson Hubbell apologized to Bucky Coon with the application process as he was caught in a "perfect storm" as the zoning was being changed at the time.

Bucky Coon explained his application process for the landscape, greenhouse and farm products proposal. In January/ February he applied to the Planning Board, in April/May he applied to the County for an Ag 20 district which he got. Recently Supervisor Crane notified him of his status.

Bill O'Neill stated a public hearing was needed for a zoning change and the board supports the project.

Guest, Rich Hansen, stated that Robert McKeon suggested making this process user friendly but Rich stated presently it is not because of the zoning change.

Mary Ann Johnson mentioned that Bucky's problems with the B-2 zoning involved State law.

Rich Hansen stated that the attorney to the town excessive questioning of the applicant about what he going to sell is over demanding. This would be a matter for the ZEO and compliance with what is listed in the Zoning Law.

Chairperson Hubbell suggested that someone from this group might want to become a Planning Board member so that Agriculture could be represented. John Hardeman did it for many years. It was noted this would be a large time commitment.

**7. EDC Outreach:** Bill O'Neill noted that even though Agriculture can build a cold storage building it still needs to be sited and go through the process. He also wanted the AOSC to reach out to the EDC, perhaps go to their meetings and request that the EDC focus on Ag Business issues. Chris Klose is on that committee and is a farmer so perhaps a contact could be made.

## **8. Other Business:**

**a. Hershberger email:** Mary Ann Johnson had gotten an email from Anne Marie Hershberger requesting the Ag Committee contact her about climate and energy. She is working with the CAC on an energy green plan proposal.

**b. EDC reference:** Michael Robertson wanted some clarification on item #7 referenced in last month's minutes regarding the town's reorganization of the EDC and the empty store fronts.

Bill O'Neill explained that the EDC has been meeting in the Village as there have been a number of empty store fronts and the goal is to make the Village center an economic engine again. Agriculture in the rural areas is also a concern.

**c. Special permit airstrip:** Chairperson Hubbell mentioned that Norman Greig of Greig Farms has applied for a special permit for an existing airplane strip. Pete Hubbell felt this is another example of where the applicant should come to the AOSC for input and potential support.

**d. State Economic Regional Council:** Mary Ann Johnson said the governor is trying to reestablish the State Economic Regional Council which includes members like Glenwood and Scenic Hudson but Agriculture is being minimized by the Westchester large conglomerate industry businesses (suits versus boots). She indicated the Mid Hudson Region Public Forum is Oct. 4<sup>th</sup>, she will send the pdf file.

Chairperson Hubbell adjourned the meeting at 8:10 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Linda J. Keeling, secretary

Approved 10-24-11