

Town of Red Hook

Agriculture and Open Space Committee

Minutes of February 25, 2013

Attendance: Co-chairperson Pete Hubbell, Co-chairperson, Norman Greig, John Hardeman, Marina Michahelles, Michael Grady Robertson, and Secretary Linda Keeling

Absent: Richard Biezynski, Mary Ann Johnson, Ken Migliorelli, and James Stagias

Guests: Town Board Councilman William O’Neill (liaison) and Christopher Klose (EDC)

Location: Red Hook Town Hall, meeting room.

Meeting Opened: The Co-chairman Pete Hubbell opened the meeting at 7:09 pm. An agenda was passed out.

Minutes: There was a quorum. The minutes of November 26, 2012 were voted on and approved.

Motion: *Norman Greig* motioned to accept the minutes, *John Hardeman* seconded and all agreed.

Note: There was no meeting for January 28, 2013 due to inclement weather conditions.

Old Business:

1. Preserve at Lakes Kill, Feller-Newmark Rd.: Bill O’Neill stated the Planning Board received the letter regarding site distances and curve. It was felt that a follow-up letter from AOSC was not needed.

2. Co-chairs: Supervisor Sue Crane informed Pete Hubbell and Norman Greig that they may continue as co-chairs which they accepted.

3. Members: All have been reappointed including James Sturgis. He is still in Florida until March 1st. Norman Greig will call him to see if he wants to continue with the group.

4. Monthly Meetings Scheduled on Town Calendar: It is easier to cancel if not needed. *Mike Robertson* inquired what kinds of issues would be discussed. Pete Hubbell explained issues before the Planning Board and subjects like Norman Greig’s farmer’s market. *Pete Hubbell* presented a copy of some of the language for a farmer’s market for the group to review.

5. Farmer’s Market Issue: *Norman Greig* didn’t feel that there should be a limit to the number of farm vendors. He felt that this restraint limits farm expansion possibilities a kin to a small amount of chickens versus a 1000 chickens. He feels this limitation and the cost for special permits shuts down Agricultural endeavors.

Norman Greig initiated a compassionate discussion on the present language in the town’s law regarding “farm market” and “farmer’s market”. He strongly felt that the language definition needs modification as a “farmer’s market” which is a collection of farm vendors within the Agricultural Business District

(ABD) is an allowable activity and supports farmer's income needs for selling their product. The Planning Board requires the issuances of a special permit and site plan. Norman stated he had to pay \$250 for the permit. Other possible costs could include \$400 for GreenPlan's review plus more escrow which could add up to about \$1,000 just to get the farmer's market started. The Intermunicipal Task Force worked on this issue 3 years ago but it still needs modification.

The group felt that the issue deserves further consideration by AOSC as to redefining the language for this.

Pete Hubbell commented that perhaps the Zoning Review Committee (ZRC) should look at this. AOSC could make recommendations.

Bill O'Neill stated a permit review is needed.

John Hardeman stated the job of the town planners is to guide the municipality. The Code comes from the people. The Code, however, is sometimes written too tightly. The terms "farm stand", "farm market 1 & 2" are in the old code. A special permit requires an engineering drawing which is costly. Some relief is needed from some of the regulations. There should be an enhancement of agriculture so it can move forward. He felt with the advent of all these new farmer's markets in town and by surrounding towns, we are getting market saturation and eating into established retail farm markets, thereby, reducing the slice of the pie for each.

Pete Hubbell felt an overhaul of the law is needed so it is less complicated for the farmer. The definition of a farmer's market within a shopping center needs rewriting.

Norman Greig answered Marina Michahelles question. He stated that the Village Farmer's Market is different due to the space constraints per square footage.

Mike Robertson stated his farm market site plan has cost him about \$750.

Bill O'Neill had to leave early.

It was felt that meats and apples are a year round item and not seasonal.

Chris Klose felt it is a definition issue which could be resolved.

Pete Hubbell suggested they draft a written recommendation.

John Hardeman felt that the Planning Board can't make a decision without consulting the Planner.

Norman Greig felt the Planner and the Attorney to the Town maybe ruling instead of the Zoning Enforcement Officer. He wanted to address the past fencing issue as to the lack of attendance for this committee due to not being heard. Fencing is a normal agricultural activity and should not require a permit. He felt the town board is ignoring the recommendations of the group. There was no Ag person on the board when the law was created so the law is not Ag friendly.

Pete Hubbell stressed the law needs revision.

John Hardeman suggested we need points written down before speaking with GreenPlan.

Pete Hubbell suggested calling a special meeting in two weeks, perhaps Tuesday, March 12th. Everyone will be emailed by the secretary about the meeting and content.

6. Agricultural Assessment Recognition by Fire Districts: Pete Hubbell brought attention to the email received from Robert McKeon regarding “Fire Districts” which could be an issue in the future. Ag assessment doesn’t apply to farms. Therefore, they would be subject to full assessment. This may be an issue in the future if the population increases enough that a full time fire department is needed.

Motion: *Marina Michahelles* motioned to adjourn the meeting and *Pete Hubbell* seconded. All agreed.

Next meeting: Special meeting Tuesday, March 12th or Wednesday March 13th depending if a quorum can be met.

The next regular meeting will be the **4th Tuesday of the month, March 26, 2013 at 7:00 pm.**

Adjournment: The meeting adjourned at 8:05 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Linda J. Keeling, Secretary

Approved 3/26/13