



Sullivan County Agriculture and Sustainability Policy Committee

November 12, 2015 AGENDA

1:30 PM

Committee Members:

Cindy Kurpil Gieger, Chair, Cora Edwards, Vice-Chair, Gene Benson, Alan Sorensen, Kitty Vetter

Call to Order

Attendance

Comments: Committee Chair

Reports:

1. Agricultural Report- Melinda Meddaugh
2. Office of Sustainable Energy (OSE) Monthly Report- Carol Roig & Stephen Stuart

Presentation: None

Discussion: None

Resolutions: None

Public Comment

Adjourn

Priority Initiative #1 Building Capacity, Organization, and Collaboration

Many of the problems, or lack of solution to known problems in the County, stem from not having the capacity, communication, and collaboration in place to support implementation. Agencies and organizations involved with agriculture, both within the County and the region, need to work together, efficiently use the many existing talents of staff and volunteers, find ways to eliminate duplication and fill gaps in programs, and build relationships. This initiative is a foundation for success in implementation.

IMMEDIATE-TERM YEAR 1: 2015/2016

ACTION ITEMS	LEAD AGENCY/ PARTNERS	STATUS	OUTPUTS	PROGRESS NOTES
1.1 Establish and create the Agricultural BR&E Program Coordinator position. See Priority Initiative 2 actions.	Legislature AFPB, Ag Task Force, CCE, Planning		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PD written/approved by TF, presentation/request to Leg, Letters being collected, seeking funds 	Continuation dependent upon funding.
1.2 Continue to support and fund HVADC, CCEC, and Sullivan County SWCD so that they can continue to provide or expand programming that supports farms.	Legislature HVADC, CCE, SWCD	Complete	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In 2016 Budget drafts 	
1.3 Continue to promote CCEC as a major resource / one-stop shop for agricultural information in Sullivan County.	CCE Legislature, all partners listed in Key	Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2 weekly radio spots (farm report) • Monthly newsletter • Monthly e-news • CCE website • Farm Visits 	
1.4 Disseminate and coordinate information resources. Create and maintain an email/distribution list of all agencies and organizations involved in agricultural-related programs. Use a website, twitter, or blogs to share information among these entities. This should include consolidating farmer and agri-business mailing lists and email lists from agencies and organizations within the County to create a single comprehensive list that can be used.	CCE Legislature, all partners listed in key	Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maple Producers List • Farmers Market List • Vegetable Producers List • Christmas Tree Producers List • Adopted CIVCRM as constituent management system, build in progress 	Currently have a program assistant helping the Ag staff to create the ag database and inventory SC farms
1.5 Regularly convene a meeting of implementation partners to discuss these priority project needs and assign lead agencies to carry out specific actions.	AFPB CCE, Planning, SCVA, FarmNetwork, IDA, Legislature	Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monthly Ag Task Force meetings 	Sending out FLPP to partners and convening a partner meeting
1.6 Create an Agriculture Task Force to spearhead implementation and guide efforts.	AFPB CCE, Planning, Legislature	Complete	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meets monthly 	

**IMMEDIATE TERM
YEAR 1: 2015/2016**

ACTION ITEMS		LEAD AGENCY/ PARTNERS	STATUS	OUTPUTS	PROGRESS NOTES
1.7	Schedule quarterly multi-county meetings between Planning staff, HVADC, CCE, and others as needed to facilitate more coordination between the counties in the region	Planning CCE, HVADC, Regional Planning Departments	In progress	Working with Planning Dept. to set up a fall meeting	
1.8	Build staffing capacity in order to assist farmers and agribusinesses with production and technical assistance.	Legislature AFPB, Planning, CCE		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ag BR&E position proposed to Leg. 	Contingent upon funding
1.9	Create an executive summary and brochure of the plan	Planning CCE, AFPB	In progress	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Executive Summary Complete Brochure under review by Planning Dept. 	

Priority Initiative #2: Agricultural Business Retention and Expansion Program

Business Retention and expansion is one of the core components of economic development programs. The purpose of a BR&E program is to communicate with local businesses in order to understand, anticipate, and ultimately address their needs, challenges, and opportunities. The agricultural business retention and expansion program will be tied to, and will in fact be critical factor in the success of, many activities and projects related to agricultural economic development.

**IMMEDIATE-TERM
YEAR 1: 2015/2016**

ACTION ITEMS		LEAD AGENCY/ PARTNERS	STATUS	OUTPUTS	PROGRESS NOTES
2.1	Develop marketing tools, including a website with links to programs and resources for farmers (see below).	CCE Planning, Pure Catskills, SCVA, USDA, CADE,	Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> CCE Website SCPEM Website 	Currently working to promote the Catskill Farmlink and Hudson Valley Farmland Finder website
2.2	Develop the Agricultural Business Retention and Expansion Program. Hire staff.	CCE/Planning AFPB, Legislature		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> PD written/approved by TF, presentation/request to Leg, Letters being collected, seeking funds 	Contingent upon funding

**SHORT-TERM
YEARS 2 & 3: 2016 - 2017**

ACTION ITEMS

**LEAD AGENCY/
PARTNERS**

STATUS

2.4	Develop an initial database of farms in Sullivan County	CCE Planning, Farm Bureau	In progress	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CivCRM adopted as constituent management system • Civi build in progress • Staff training in progress • Drafted farmer survey to collect commodity/production data • Data Collected: Maple Farmers, Vegetable Producers, dairy farmers, Christmas Tree Farmers 	Working to develop listing to develop livestock list
2.5	Develop a business visitation program.	CCE Planning, AFPB	In progress	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Informal and requested farm visits occurring weekly by CCE Ag staff & ED • Formal paper survey drafted • CCE Ag Outreach Packet outline completed, folders on order • Web survey in development 	Staff are creating folders for farm visits, which will have a survey and resources. Staff created a survey to go out to all SC farmers. One of the questions asks if they would like a CCE farm visit.
2.7	Provide farmers with general business support and assistance	CCE Planning, IDA, SC Partnership, SC Chamber, HVADC, CADE	In Progress	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1/1/15-10/30/15: 950 inquiries answered at CCE • 35 farm visits, 12 workshops • Informal and requested farm visits occurring weekly by CCE Ag staff & ED • Formal paper and online survey drafted • CCE Ag Outreach Packet outline completed, folders on order • Web survey in development 	
2.8	Work with the Center for Workforce Development to assist farmers with farm worker recruitment and connect them to people looking for agricultural employment.	CWD Planning, CCE, CADE, Glynwood			

2.9	Collaborate regularly with agency partners to provide referrals, follow-up, etc.	CCE/Planning Agency Partners	In progress		
2.11	Simplify existing agri-business loan fund programs. Revise application forms and program descriptions so that they are easier to understand and more "farmer-friendly."	Planning IDA, SC Partnership, HVADC, USDA, CCE	In progress	Working with Planning Dept. to develop loan program brochure	On the final draft of brochure and anticipate that it will be printed in October
2.13	Work with agency partners to develop communication tools.	CCE/Planning Agency Partners			
2.14	Establish a website as a portal to programs, resources, and support for farmers in Sullivan County, preferably with a simple, easy to remember URL.	CCE Planning	In progress	CCE is in the process of updating our website	

Priority Initiative #3: Agritourism Enhancement

This program will entail moving agritourism to the forefront. It will include new opportunities for both farmers and visitor's, as well as leveraging existing efforts such as Pure Catskill, Made in Sullivan County Catskills, tourism marketing and promotion, mapping and wayfinding, lodging and special events. There is a need to develop new agritourism products, experiences, and events;leverage the resources of and coordinate with existing organizations involved in agriculture and tourism; and make the County more "tourism friendly". This would provide additional opportunities for farmers to diversify and increase their incomes, while bringing valuable external dollars into the County.

IMMEDIATE-TERM YEAR 1: 2015/2016

ACTION ITEMS		LEAD AGENCY/ PARTNERS	STATUS	OUTPUTS	PROGRESS NOTES
3.1	Create an Agritourism Task Force	SCVA CCE, Planning, Farm Network,			
3.4	Updates the Fresh from the Farm agricultural trail map online	SCVA CCE, Planning, Farm Network	Complete	SCVA completed summer 2015	

**SHORT-TERM
YEARS 2 & 3: 2016/2017**

ACTION ITEMS		LEAD AGENCY/ PARTNERS	STATUS	OUTPUTS	PROGRESS NOTES
3.3	Work with CCE and other partners to provide training (and assessment) on developing an agritourism enterprise.	CCE SCVA, Pure Catskills, Farm Network, Farm Credit East	In progress	Developing a workplan and timeline for this	Working to create agri-tourism workshops for 2016. Ag tourism workshop will be AG-Tourism 101 and will cover the basics of ag tourism for farmers. Working to provide a fact sheet for the public so that they are educated about farm safety in SC
3.2	Increase the participation of Sullivan County farms in Pure Catskills and/or Hudson Valley Bountly.	Pure Catskills CCE, HVADC	In progress		Connected with these organizations, receiving information to provide to farmers, promoting in CCE newsletter. Sent out monthly email to contacts and putting their info in our farm packets
3.5	Expand marketing of farms, farmers' markets, farmstands, distilleries and breweries, etc., through facebook,	SCVA CCE, Planning, HVADC	In progress	Completed farmers market brochure. Worked with the Planning Dept. to apply for a Farmers Market promotion grant	Coordinated a farmers market manager meeting and developing the RFP for the grant.

Priority #4: New/Young Farmer Program

New farmers face barriers in four major areas including access to training, education and technical assistance, access to land, access to capital and credit and access to markets. New farmers need programs and services that enable them to acquire the information and resources they need to succeed. There is a need for an expanded effort to recruit new farmers to Sullivan County. This program represents a concerted effort to "sell" Sullivan County as a good place to farm, targeted to young farmers and the next generation of farmers.

**IMMEDIATE-TERM
YEARS 1: 2015/2016**

ACTION ITEMS		LEAD AGENCY/ PARTNERS	STATUS	OUTPUTS	PROGRESS NOTES
4.7	Promote existing Sullivan County agribusiness loan programs and work to help new and expanding farmers understand and participate in these programs.	Planning CCE, IDA, Partnership, HVADC, Chamber, CMK	In progress	Working with Planning Dept. to finalize loan program brochure	In progress
4.3	Adapt the Orange County New Farmer Manual for use in Sullivan County.	CCE		Staff are starting to gather information for this manual	
4.4	Create fact sheets with information gleaned from this plan, and resources from Cornell and other research that outlines market opportunities that may be viable for new farmers.	CCE Planning			
4.8	Increase programmatic support for Cornell Cooperative Extension educational programs in 4-H to build interest among youth in agriculture.	Legislature CCE, Planning			

**SHORT-TERM
YEARS 2 & 3: 2016/2017**

ACTION ITEMS		LEAD AGENCY/ PARTNERS	STATUS	OUTPUTS	PROGRESS NOTES
4.1	Provide technical training in farming to take advantage of emerging markets.	CCE Planning, HVADC, CADE, Glynwood, BOCES		CCE receives inquiries on a regular basis about new markets, such as mushroom production, hops and small grains	Provide technical assistance and info to these beginner farmers. Working with Soil and Water to offer small grain programs for 2016.
4.6	Provide incentives, and advertise existing funding opportunities for farm start-up operations.	Legislature Planning, IDA, Partnership, USDA, CMK			Working on brochure and farm packets
4.12	Work with the real property and tax departments of the County to identify and remove farm properties from the Tax Foreclosure list. Tie this program to a requirement that the interested farmer go through a beginner farmer training program.	Planning Legislature, CCE, Glynwood, HVADC		Planning and CCE staff are looking into other models in the state	
4.18	Utilize NYFarmlink.com, Catskill Farmlink, and Hudson Valley Farm Link, an existing established site to post farms and farmland for sale.	CCE Planning, WAC, American Farmland Trust, Glynwood	In progress	Promote these websites to CCE inquiries	
4.9	Convene a meeting of school district officials to discuss mechanisms to get schools involved in agriculture.	CCE Planning, Sullivan Renaissance, BOCES, SCDPH, SCCC, CMK			

Priority Initiative #5: Value-Added and Diversification Initiative

This program has two parts. The first is to take agricultural initiatives already underway and make them successful. This part is oriented to good organization, planning, coordination with farmers, getting the right operators, and marketing. The second part is oriented to providing farms with training, business planning, and assistance in identifying and understanding market opportunities, and helping farmers take advantage of funding that can be used for value-added processing, diversification and expansion. This initiative will work in conjunction with the Agricultural Business Retention and Expansion Program and the New/Young Farmer Program.

IMMEDIATE-TERM YEAR 1: 2015/2016

ACTION ITEMS	LEAD AGENCY/ PARTNERS	STATUS	OUTPUTS	PROGRESS NOTES
5.7 Continue to develop and operate the new CCE Entrepreneurial & Teaching (EaT) Kitchen.	CCE Sullivan Renaissance, BOCES	Complete/ ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1/1/15-9/30/15 75 inquiries answered, 7 workshops offered, 2 regular business user, 2 on deck with Ag & Markets • USDA LFPP RFP submitted & received to offset rental and course fees 	Working with SCCC, Catskill Mountaineer and Pure Catskills, SCFMA to develop a small food processor workshop for April 8th 2016.
5.2 Work with Sullivan County dairy farmers and establish niche dairy and value-added dairy products to support the dairy industry in the County.	CCE Planning, HVADC, IDA, CADE	In progress	Working with Planning Dept. to provide technical assistance for dairy processing project	Finalizing dairy processing project

5.3	Promote the red meat processing facility in Liberty to livestock farms in Sullivan County and other adjacent counties.	CCE IDA, Planning, AFPB, HVADC	In progress	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ED on RFP review committee RFP went out, applications under review 	
5.9	Tap into expertise available at Cornell University, SUNY Sullivan and other regional colleges and universities to help farmers diversify their operations and develop new products and services.	CCE/SUNY Sullivan BOCES	Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cornell Farm to School program: monthly meetings, draft production/price point survey, SUNY Farm development Cornell attendance at CCE Neversink Farms Tour 	
5.1 1	Continue to work with and develop the high tunnel program at CCE, and develop a funding mechanism for farmers to purchase high tunnels after completing training.	CCE Sullivan Renaissance, Planning, IDA, Partnership, BOCES, CMK, NRCS	In progress	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> High tunnel construction completed June 2015 Planted June 2015 Workshop August & November SUNY Sullivan application for high tunnel development/on campus farm 	Developing workshops for 2016
5.2	Support diversification or value added production/expansion through Sullivan County's Agr-Business Revolving Loan Fund.	Planning CCE, IDA, Partnership, CMK	In progress	Inserting County Revolving Loan program brochure in Farm Visit packets	

SHORT-TERM YEARS 2 & 3: 2016/2017

ACTION ITEMS	LEAD AGENCY/ PARTNERS	STATUS	OUTPUTS	PROGRESS NOTES
5.4	HVADC Planning, IDA, CCE			
5.10	CCE HVADC, Cornell		Working with Soil and Water Conservation District on grant to do trials on grains for distilleries	
5.1	CCE HVADC			Ag BR&E Role

Priority Initiative #6: Buy Local Initiative

This initiative is aimed at improving the local sales of and demand for fresh, local foods. Project components include farm-to-table, farm-to-institution, and farm to business programs, as well as local marketing/public relations and a Sullivan Fresh initiative to highlight businesses that use or sell local produce and products. Although direct sales of agricultural products in Sullivan County increased dramatically, the amount of revenue should be significantly higher. Sale of farm products to institutions should also be strengthened. There is also a need to better educate consumers in Sullivan County about the benefits of eating fresh, local foods.

**IMMEDIATE-TERM
YEAR 1: 2015/2016**

		LEAD AGENCY/ PARTNERS	STATUS	OUTPUTS	PROGRESS NOTES
6.1	Develop a Sullivan Fresh initiative. This program reaches out to local businesses and a) works to match their needs with local products, and b) provides a "Sullivan Fresh" logo or tag line that they can use to advertise the fact that local agricultural products are sold or used.	Planning SCVA, CCE, Pure Catskills, Chamber	Started	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Met with Pure Catskills, interested in building on the Fresh from the Catskills work. SCVA offered art work and assistance on this as well. 	
6.7	As part of the Sullivan Fresh Initiative. Create a Sullivan County Buy Local initiative, message, and tag line for promotion.	Planning SCVA, CCE, Pure Catskills, Chamber	See above		
6.8	Develop a Pride of Sullivan or Sullivan Fresh marketing/media plan to advertise these farms and farm products to the general public. Develop a campaign kit that farmers receive when they participate. These could include posters, stickers, or table tents. *MARKETING TOOL	Planning SCVA, CCE, Pure Catskills, Chamber	See above	Through Farmers Market promotion grant, we can begin to develop this initiative.	
6.9	Develop marketing brochures and rack cards promoting specific agricultural areas.	CCE SCVA, Planning, Pure Catskills, Chamber	In progress	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maple complete Farmers Market Complete Veg Producers Complete Christmas Trees in progress 	Commodities: Livestock, Honey, Dairy, Forestry, etc. Progress dependent on funding for each brochure

ACTION ITEMS	LEAD AGENCY/ PARTNERS	STATUS	OUTPUTS	PROGRESS NOTES
6.2 Concentrate on expanding farmer participation in the Pride of New York and Pure Catskills branding campaigns, and continue to distribute the Guide to Pure Catskills Products throughout Sullivan County.	Pure Catskills CCE, Planning, SCVA, Chamber		Developing a workplan for this	
6.4 Develop a local food procurement policy for Sullivan County agencies and institutions, possibly with a 10% or 20% local sourcing requirement.	Legislature Planning, CCE, BOCES, SCCC, SCDPH,		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> CCE Farm to Institution Planning Project to commence Oct/Nov 2015. Will collect data from local institutions re: challenges to local procurement & producers challenges to selling. Data will be used in 2017 on strategies to bridge gap. 	
6.5 Request that the County of Sullivan IDA encourage businesses receiving IDA assistance to commit to local purchasing agricultural commodities and/or in some way supporting local agriculture.	IDA CCE, Planning		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Suggested during red meat RFP development—no action thus far 	
6.6 Continue existing consumer education efforts and farmers' markets to help the public understand the importance of agriculture. Incorporate cooking demonstrations and other activities as appropriate to strengthen the connection with buying locally.	CCE SCFMA, Area Farmers Markets, SCDPH, Chamber, Planning, CMK		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Farmers Market food demos offered regularly by MG Farmers Market brochures 	Additional food demo opps will begin when CHSC commences late 2015-2020.

Farmland Preservation Strategies

While Sullivan County is not under intense development pressure, farmland loss still occurs due to both conversion to non-farm uses, as well as abandonment farmland. Although the best way to preserve farmland is to have economically successful farmers, the complexity of issues facing farmers today makes it imperative that farmlands remain available and cost effective to farmers, especially young and new farmers. In Sullivan County, land costs may be more of an issue than the lack of lands to farm. There is a great need for affordable and accessible land. There are many methods to address protecting farmland. Some strategies are direct land preservation techniques to promoting farm-friendly regulations and training for local officials.

SHORT-TERM YEARS 2 & 3: 2015/2016

ACTION ITEMS	LEAD AGENCY/ PARTNERS	STATUS	OUTPUTS	PROGRESS NOTES
7.4 Provide training for local officials: ⇒ Hold presentations for town officials to inform them of this plan and the tools it provides. Use the executive summary as a handout. ⇒ Provide training to planning boards and ZBAs about farming and evaluating project impacts on farming. ⇒ Provide information to towns about appointing an agricultural member to their planning board and encourage them to do so. ⇒ Provide a project review checklist for planning boards to use in evaluating projects that may impact farms or farmland. ⇒ Develop training and educational materials for assessors and for landowners to help them understand farm assessment practices and tax bills.	Planning CCE, HVADC		Reaching out to municipalities to let them know about the municipal planning grant through NYS Ag and Markets	
7.5 Provide for succession and transition planning so that farms remain active during transitions and transfer to a new generation.	CCE Planning, HVADC, Farm Credit East	Complete/ ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Succession workshop offered every other year through CCE 	