



Sullivan County Agriculture and Sustainability Policy Committee

April 14, 2016 AGENDA

1:30 PM

Committee Members:

Catherine Owens, Chair, Nadia Rasjz, Vice-Chair, Mark McCarthy, Terri Ward, Scott Samuelson

Call to Order

Attendance

Comments: Committee Chair

Presentation:

1. Purchase of Hydroelectric Power – Gravity Renewables, Inc.

Reports:

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

Discussion: None

Resolutions: None

Public Comment

Adjourn

Agriculture Report March 2016

Agriculture Districts:

The 30 Day window is April 1st – April 30th. The timeframe for review of the Ag Districts are as follows:

- Ag District Applicant Site Visits: (1st Week of May)
- AFLPB Meeting to review applications (May 10th)
- Report submitted to Legislature/Resolution to set Public Hearing Date: (May 19th Executive Leg. Meeting)
- Public Hearing Date: (June 23rd)
- Vote to approve Ag District (July 21st)

Educational Programs:

- **Introduction to Farming Workshop:** 12 Beginner Farmers attended the workshop and learned about how to set up a farm, agricultural districts and assessments, regulations, marketing and business planning.
- **Agriculture Business Planning Workshop:** 15 existing and beginner farmers attended the workshop and learned first-hand the different elements of a business plan, the importance of a business plan and different financial structures and recordkeeping.
- **Workshops for April:**
 - April 14th, 530pm – 730pm: Introduction to Small Scale Livestock Production
 - April 18th, 6pm – 8pm: Understanding Farm Leases

Dairy Processing Project:

We have finalized the equipment list and anticipate ordering the dairy processing equipment this month for the new organic, yogurt facility. The farmer is now adding cheese production to the project.

Ag Loan Program:

The Planning Dept. is currently working with a start-up orchard on funding. The new loan brochure is being distributed throughout the County.

Inquiries:

We received over 50 inquiries this month on the following topics:

- Financing/business planning
- Farmland Preservation
- Agricultural Districts
- Livestock production
- Poultry Processing and equipment
- Vegetable production
- Apple pruning
- Beginner Farmer inquiries
- Maple Syrup
- Solar Farms
- Marketing

Farmers Market Promotion:

- Project: CCE and Planning are working with the Farmers Market Managers for all of the farmers markets in Sullivan County, SCVA and Public Health to develop a marketing plan for 2016 – 2017, in order to increase attendance at our farmers markets. A resolution to enter into contract with Center Most Marketing is on the agenda for the April 20th Executive Committee.
- We sent out a short survey in order to develop the branding for the farmers market project. The survey asked about regional/local identity and buzz words associated with farmers markets/eating local.

Radio Promotion:

- Ag Reports & Market Reports: CCE provided weekly ag market reports for Thunder 102

Farm to Market/Institution Project:

- CCE is currently collecting information for the USDA Farm to Institution Planning Project. As part of the project we are surveying farmers, institutions and distributors, this also includes conducting farm visits. In addition, we are developing a better inventory of the farms located in Sullivan County. To date, we have surveyed over 20 farmers, 1 school and 1 distributor. We anticipate interviewing 5 more large scale institutions and 3 more distributors by June. The planning project will be completed by September. Once complete, we will work on implementation.
- CCE anticipates working with Ulster and Orange CCE to provide training to farmers on how to sell to large scale institutions and restaurants this fall/winter.
- CCE staff is attending a Farm to Restaurant Train the Trainer program on April 18th – 19th. This training will help to expand the farm to restaurant project. We also anticipate working with our partners on this project, which include SCVA, Public Health and Catskill Regional Hospital.

Agri-Business Retention and Expansion Program:

- As part of this program we have accomplished the following:
 - Visited 15 farms
 - Created 150 farm business resource packets. We have handed out approximately 30.
 - We are currently working on a Sullivan County farm resource manual.
 - We developed the farm business workshop series.
 - We received almost 30 applications for the agri-business coordinator. We are currently conducting interviews for the position.

Research Projects:

- We are currently working with Cornell University and a vegetable farmer on an organic based no-till research project. This is a statewide project with Cornell University that will help to gain a better understanding of whether or not certain organic methods can increase profitability.

Agriculture Bus Tour:

- The tour is scheduled to take place May 10th. We tentatively have 5 farms on the agenda ranging from dairy, beef, maple, vegetable and poultry.

SC Office of Sustainable Energy (OSE) Activities Report for April 2016

Reporting on March 2016

I. Requested information:

- Use of herbicides in conjunction with solar arrays
- Recycling of solar panels

II. ENERGY MANAGEMENT FOR SC FACILITIES

Current initiatives. Work continues on the following priority projects:

- NYPA Potential for HVAC replacement at SC Government Center
- Hybrid Vehicles for SC Fleet
- Solar Installation at the Liberty Health and Community Services Campus
- Adult Care Center Energy Efficiency Measures

III. SULLIVAN COUNTY COMMUNITY CHOICE AGGREGATION (CCA)

We have been advised that the Public Service Commission (PSC) will likely notify us in April regarding approval to move forward with the SC CCA. Instead of considering our petition as a demonstration project, the PSC will likely issue rules based upon the information they have already collected, and SASD's proposal on behalf of Sullivan County will then be eligible for approval as a regular project (instead of a demonstration project as originally proposed.)

IV. CLIMATE SMART COMMUNITIES

Work continues with the SC towns that have adopted the Climate Smart Communities Pledge and are working on a variety of energy initiatives.

Tusten: Tusten expects to begin construction on their solar installation within the next few weeks.

Bethel: Bethel is moving forward with energy efficiency and lighting improvements at town buildings and with a formal policy regarding energy efficient vehicles for the town fleet.

In addition, Bethel is proceeding with discussions with solar energy developers for large scale shared solar project. They have consulted the EPA for guidance regarding solar installations on landfills. EPA provides a no-cost solar PV assessment of landfill sites, which includes a site visit and physical assessment of the landfill for flat/gently sloped areas preferably facing south which can potentially accommodate a solar PV array, and a detailed written report.

Zoning for utility scale solar: We continue to provide guidance and recommendations to towns to help them formulate zoning ordinances for large-scale commercial solar installations. NYS is expected to provide a model ordinance later this month. We encourage towns not to opt out of the 15 year property tax exemption program, but to consider implementing a PILOT (payment in lieu of taxes) program for large scale projects. A short moratorium on large scale projects would help towns gain the time needed to develop their zoning and permitting rules. We will work with the Division of Planning and Environmental Management to assist with this process.

V. NY PRIZE Micro-Grid Projects Liberty and Monticello

The deadline for Booz Allen Hamilton (BAH) to submit their Phase 1 Feasibility Studies for Liberty and Monticello was February 28, 2016. SASD provided project support as requested by BAH. BAH provided a briefing on March 3rd to share information about the Phase I Feasibility Studies.

VI. Presentations and Community Education

SASD is working with Cornell Cooperative Extension to provide present a workshop on solar options for homeowners and farmers. The event is scheduled for Saturday, May 21st at CCE, from 10:00 AM to noon. We will provide a pot luck lunch.

Carol Roig and Stephen Stuart
4-6-16