



Sullivan County Agriculture and Sustainability Policy Committee

November 9, 2017 AGENDA

12:30 PM

Committee Members:

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

Call to Order

Attendance

Comments: Committee Chair

Reports:

1. Office of Sustainable Energy – Heather Brown
2. Parks and Recreation- Brian Scardefield
3. Agricultural Report- Melinda Meddaugh

Presentation: None

Discussion: None

Resolutions: None

Public Comment

Adjourn



Sullivan County Office of Sustainable Energy
SULLIVAN COUNTY GOVERNMENT CENTER
100 NORTH STREET
PO BOX 5012
MONTICELLO, NY 12701-5192

Sullivan County Office of Sustainable Energy Monthly Report for October 2017

Electric Vehicles

- Coordinated execution of contract with the Town of Bethel for the EV Infrastructure Reimbursement program.
- Met with staff from Public Works as well as Grants Administration to coordinate efforts to submit for funding to the NYS DEC for Electric Vehicle Supply Equipment at the Government Center

Solarize Sullivan

- Solarize Sullivan launched its community solar program, which is expected to save participants 10% on their electric bills.

Outreach

- The Village of Monticello is now a Climate Smart Community, having adopted the pledge in October. OSE will be working with the Village to identify action items that have already been completed as well as potential future projects and/or initiatives.
- Continued to participate in discussions with representatives from the Ethelbert B. Crawford Library with regard to their solar charging kiosk.
- We continue to refine the resource guide and anticipate that it will go to print in early December.

Meetings/Events

- Attended "Paving the Way to Broadway" event at the Ethelbert B. Crawford Library .
- Participated in training for new software – timekeeping and agenda submissions
- Met with the Sustainability Director for SCCC and the Fire Training Coordinator to discuss potential partnerships to bring training to our emergency services/first responders

- Met with representatives at Sullivan Renaissance to discuss upcoming initiatives of both organizations and potential collaborations.
- Attended board meeting of the Village of Monticello to discuss the Climate Smart Communities Program
- Met with representatives from the Monticello Housing Authority to discuss incentives for potential energy efficiency project and building improvements.
- All OSE offices are now located on the 2nd floor of the Government Center. Thank you to the Division of Public Works for all of their work!



COUNTY OF SULLIVAN
Parks and Recreation
SULLIVAN COUNTY GOVERNMENT CENTER
100 NORTH STREET
PO BOX 5012
MONTICELLO, NY 12701

Monthly Report

Agriculture & Sustainability Committee Meeting – November 9, 2017

- Fort Delaware: The Fort Delaware staff and DPW have been putting everything away in the cabins for the winter months. We pruned a lot of the brush that was starting to get overgrown around the cabins.

The Fort manager attended a Colonial Trade Faire at Historic Schoenbrunn Village in Ohio that is a similar museum to Fort Delaware. She came back with a lot of connections and ideas for our Fort that we want to implement.

All schools have been sent the flyers for our 2018 Fort Delaware Student Days. We have some schools that have already contacted us and scheduled their trip.

- DPW have been working on closing up the parks and facilities for the winter and completing maintenance projects.
- Shared Services: I have been meeting on a weekly basis with the Town of Liberty Park and Recreation staff and Town Supervisor.
- John Conway contacted me and would like to meet to discuss the possibility of working together on a project that would entail Interpretive Signage and Publication through funding The Delaware Company received. We are going to come up with a project that would enhance the Minisink Battleground Park.
- Hurleyville Cultural Center: The DPW staff have been changing ceiling lights that were out at the Hurleyville Cultural Center and we are working on getting more lighting for the outdoor pathway and parking lots. We are also replacing flooring in the basement that had lifted from the flooding due to the broken pipe in the basement. I put an ad out for an attendant to cover the Sunday shift and fill in where needed.
- I attended the D&H Transportation Heritage Council meeting which is a group that helps promote and preserve the D&H canal. The county is a member of the group. The group is currently coming up with informational DVD's which will include the Counties section of the trail in the near future.

OCTOBER 2017 AGRICULTURE REPORT



Cornell University
Cooperative Extension
Sullivan County



UPCOMING EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS:

- Business Planning Workshop, November 29th
- Capturing Money Using Quickbooks, December 4th & 11th
- Finding the Right Funding for your Farm, December 7th

CATSKILLS KITCHEN FOOD INCUBATOR PROGRAM

The kitchen continues to gain interest and new users. Potential users have toured the kitchen and we receive calls from interested users on a regular basis. We are hosting the 2nd annual Catskills Farm and Food Conference on November 3rd, along with a business planning workshop on November 29th. We currently have 2 new users for the kitchen producing granola and sauces.

FARM TO SCHOOL PROJECT

October is Farm to School month. Staff participated in a Taste Test Thursday at Liberty Central School. Students had the opportunity to sample a new menu item using local farm products. The district intends to offer a Taste Test Thursday 1x per month. CCEC also submitted a NYS Farm to School grant on behalf of the Monticello, Fallsburg, Liberty and BOCES school district. The grant proposed to hire a Farm to School Coordinator to assist with coordinating farm to school initiatives such as taste test, menu development, procurement, the development of educational resources and connecting buyers to farmers.

VALUE - ADDED DAIRY PROCESSING PROJECT

The new facility is currently producing yogurt and working on fine tuning the product. However, the facility is able to produce their own bottled milk. Once the recipe has been finalized we will schedule a ribbon cutting ceremony. We are currently working through completing the reporting paperwork for the USDA and CDBG grant programs.

Agri-Business Retention & Expansion Program:

The Agriculture Coordinator, with assistance through existing staff, accomplished the following:

- **Farm Assistance:** Assisted 25 farms through phone and email and conducted 10 field visits. Assistance includes business planning, beef production, specialty crop production, hay and soil testing, Assisted over 100 consumers with agriculture related phone calls and emails.
- **Programming: Upcoming ag business programs** include Quickbooks, funding and business planning. We recently developed a business plan template specific to farmers.

TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE:

Staff assisted producers with the following:

- **Soil Testing:** 19 soil tests were conducted in October and soil amendment recommendations discussed.
- **Forage Testing:** 6 forage tests were conducted in October.
- **Business Planning Support:** Staff are working with new farmers and farmers looking to expand on business planning in the areas of high tunnel production, beef, and specialty crops. Staff are working to develop a model Business Plan template.
- **Beginner Farmer:** Staff have conducted field visits and meetings with landowners looking to start farming. Staff has educated beginning farmers in the areas of ag assessment, ag districts and production needs
- **Crop production:** Staff have been assisting farmers with options for potential for specialty crop production.

RIGHT TO FARM LAW: IN A NUTSHELL

Written by *Nai Tompkins, Ag Business Coordinator*



Have you ever had this moment? You're driving on some road you've gone over a million times. Every little house, business, or street sign blend together after you drive it a few times. Then all of a sudden, you're snapped out of your trance! There's something new that wasn't there before. As you get closer, you start to notice the details. It's rectangular, longer than it is wide. You can't quite make out the words yet, but you know it's green and white. As you draw closer and closer, it becomes easier to read. The top reads "Bethel" followed by "A Right to Farm Community" below that. There's a great and white silhouette of a farmer leading to their fields on a tractor, with the words "Share the Road" at the bottom. "Well, that's new," you think to yourself. But what is it? And where did it come from? Maybe you haven't seen these signs yet, but you might soon! Towns are starting to put up Right to Farm signs all over Sullivan County, and we're here to help you understand what that means.

A Right to Farm (RTF) law is a law where the title pretty much speaks for itself. It helps to protect and promote the farmer's right to farm, and maintains their opportunities to run a successful farm business. To do this, Right to Farm laws can be created by a town or county in order to promote farming activities. Right to Farm laws can vary slightly between each town. For example, the Town of Bethel's Right to Farm law states "The Town Board recognizes farming is an essential enterprise and an important industry which enhances the economic base, natural environment and quality of life in the Town of Bethel". The town board further declares that it "shall be the policy of this Town to encourage agriculture and foster understanding by all residents of the necessary day-to-day operations involved in farming so as to encourage cooperation with those practices". And "it is the general purpose...to permit the continuation of agricultural practices; to protect the existence and operation of farms; to encourage the initiation and expansion of farms and businesses; and to promote new ways to resolve disputes concerning agricultural practices and farm operations. In order to maintain a viable farming economy in the Town of Bethel, it is necessary to limit the circumstances under which farming may be

deemed to be a nuisance and to allow agricultural practices inherent to and necessary for the business of farming to proceed and be undertaken free of unreasonable and unwarranted interference or restriction".

A town's Right to Farm law contains provisions for farmers to conduct reasonable and necessary agricultural practices and does not constitute a threat to public health and safety. In order to promote better relations between farmers and neighbors, many Right to Farm laws require realtors to inform prospective buyers about such laws, and that farming activities may occur, possibly resulting in dust, noise, and odor. Many Right to Farm laws also include language regarding controversies between farm and non-farm neighbors. For example, should a controversy arise that cannot be settled between the neighbor and the farmer, either party may submit the controversy to a dispute resolution committee. Remember, as we mentioned earlier, each municipality's Right to Farm law may differ slightly, so please check with your municipality regarding exactly what your town's Right to Farm law says.

The primary reason these protections are in place is that farmers grow our food, and we need to protect their ability to do their work in order to have a readily available supply of food. Agriculture can be a messy, noisy, and smelly endeavor. If these protections weren't in place, farmers could incur all sorts of nuisance lawsuits for doing activities they need to do in order to raise livestock or grow crops. Residents may want towns to impose restrictions on them.

"As a farmer, I know how dangerous it is to "share the road" with other motorists. These signs, I hope, will raise the awareness of these drivers and help make our roads safer for ALL of us to travel. Thank you to Extension and Sullivan County's Planning Department for making that possible."

- Thomas R. Bose, Town of Callicoon Supervisor

making it difficult to make a living. Farmers already meet many challenges on a daily basis. Between never knowing what price the goods you produce will go for, unpredictable weather, and any number of other obstacles that can occur in general, it's a very tough and fragile thing to keep a farm business up and running. If local towns were to pass regulations that could unreasonably obstruct a farmer's ability to do their work, there would likely be very few farms left. Once farm land gets bought up by non-agricultural buyers, typically the last thing that ever gets planted in the ground is blacktop. To facilitate the preservation of farmland in Sullivan County, Cornell Cooperative Extension Sullivan County, Sullivan County's Agricultural and Farmland Protection Board, and various municipalities have been working hard to put up Right to Farm signs and to increase consistent understanding of best farm management practices.

One of the goals of the Sullivan County Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan is to "increase public recognition of the value of agriculture and farmland, and to develop a better understanding of farm issues by non-farmers". To accomplish this goal, Cornell Cooperative Extension Sullivan County applied for, and was awarded, a grant to help develop those lovely road signs that you may have seen while out and about. Eleven out of the 16 municipalities (Bethel, Callicoon, Freetown, Rockland, Marmetown, Newmarket, Liberty, Cochenecton, Delaware, Lambertland, and Faretsburgh) have RTF laws enacted. Unfortunately, there is

a huge gap in public awareness about the existence of these laws. Most of the time, folks don't realize that they're living in a Right to Farm Community until they encounter a conflict with a farming neighbor. This can lead to frustration for both parties involved. In order to narrow this gap, the County's agricultural agencies partnered with municipalities to install RTF signs within those 11 towns. Our hope is that these signs will serve as visual reminders about the importance of agriculture in Sullivan County. Additional educational materials and opportunities are on the horizon in 2018.

Cornell Cooperative Extension Sullivan County has updated its website with information on RTF laws, the municipalities with the laws in place, and will soon include additional information on agricultural districts. When people have questions about the laws, and where they may be implemented, they can visit sullivanco.ny.us or contact their local municipal offices to get the information they need. CCE has also held a workshop on RTF laws for both realtor and town officials. This workshop helps disperse information on the laws to a wide audience. If realtors are aware that the property they are showing is in a Right to Farm town, they can make the potential homeowners aware of that, and answer questions the buyers may have. If town officials can speak about the law in a knowledgeable way, they'll be able to explain it to town residents that may be wondering about what farmers can and cannot do. We plan on making this an ongoing workshop opportunity, and will be offering another in winter of 2018.

Right to Farm laws exist for a reason. Farming is a vital part of the economy in Sullivan County, and it's important to protect farmers from harmful regulations or lawsuits that may be brought against them for doing their jobs. It's important the public knows about these laws too. After all, they are also a part of the community they live in, and should know how to coexist and work with farmers who produce the food supply. The next time you're stuck behind a tractor for two miles, just remember this: that ten minute delay would only get you two blocks further down in NYC. So slow down, crank up some tunes on your radio, enjoy the scenery around you, and share the road with farmers.

Sullivan County Right to Farm signs were designed by Dorene Warner from WDesign in Barryville NY and are produced by Keller Signs in Monticello.

