

DRAFT

Town of Red Hook

Agriculture and Open Space Committee

Minutes of December 27, 2011

Attendance: Co-chairperson Pete Hubbell, Co-chairperson Norman Greig (8:15), Richard Biezynski, James Stagias (7:15), Ken Migliorelli (7:25 pm), and Secretary Linda Keeling

Absent: Mary Ann Johnson, Marina Michahelles, Michael Grady Robertson, and Town Board Councilman William O'Neill (liaison)

Guests: Rosemarie Zengen (guest speaker)

Meeting Opened: Co-chairperson Pete Hubbell opened the meeting at 7:00 pm.

Old Business: suspended

New Business: The purpose of this special meeting was to hear a concept proposal by Rosemarie Zengen on her development of a brochure promoting the local farmers. She referred to it as the *Red Hook Area Farmer* with emphasis of a specific farm on the front cover.

Rosemarie explained that the brochure would not cost the Ag Committee any money. It would be an educational tool supported by advertisements with the format of an almanac. The front page would use 100% recycled paper and color. It would not contain political posturing. There would also be stories for example on farming issues, compost, feeding families economically, building kites, tying knots, folk medicine treatments, formulas for whitewashing, introduction to canning, explanation of the barter system, tips on raising rabbits and chickens, instructions on how to transplant a tree, how to operate a tractor safely, how to harness wind and geothermal power, etc. Locals associated with historic structures could write articles. Distribution would be at hotels, restaurants, chamber and tourism booths, the local schools, etc. The number produced is dependent on the number of advertisers. If well received by the public it could probably help in attaining grants.

Rich Biezynski thought the ideas were terrific and was thankful for Rosemarie's energy. Jim Stagias thought it was a positive approach. Jim noted he had been asking the town to sponsor publicity for those in the ABD. Rosemarie felt that no other community has an almanac that centers on the farmers and the community. It could also draw upon the other Red Hook Town committees and their expertise.

Pete also liked the idea. He would like to see local restaurant reviews featuring products from the local farmers so people could visit the farm located on a map. He liked the ideas of recipes from the farmers. He didn't want to create competition with farm animals in the backyard with other commercial farmers. He likes the idea of the former Buckley farm having cows. He thought an article about how many acres

it takes to grow vegetables is good as it keeps farm land active. Rich felt this booklet would be an added tool for the local restaurants.

Rosemarie explained that the Ag Committee could endorse this but would not be the producer of it. She would be the editor, publisher and responsible for bills due. Each month the content could be reviewed by the Ag Committee for their editorial input before being distributed quarterly to the public.

Linda Keeling explained that grant acquisition takes between one to two years from the initial idea before actually receiving funding. Starting this booklet now would give you several issues distributed to several thousands of people which could help get a grant to fund locals involved with its continuation and further distribution.

Rosemarie felt she would like to send a copy of the cover to the local newspapers as they are always looking for local photographs of events in towns. The group liked her logo of the hook and the chicken. She may expand upon it to include produce.

Everyone was enthusiastically supportive of the concept and felt this was the first positive concrete proposal to promote the local farms in many years. Rosemarie Zengen explained that she would produce the brochure no matter what but she was looking for this group's endorsement.

Everyone felt that the brochure should promote farmers within the zoned Agricultural district for which Hannaford is not included. Rich explained how the supermarkets increase their profits by guaranteeing sales whereby the vendor owns the product but only gets paid for the sales. The local farmers could not survive under those conditions. The discussion focused on a condition for advertising in the brochure based on carrying and selling Red Hook farmer products. The overall affect is to promote tourism and the economic ripple effect for other businesses. This will also help the many new farmers who are not that well known by the general community and inform the locals of what they are selling.

Pete Hubbell asked how it would be different from the *Mercantile* magazine. She responded that it would be focused on the Red Hook farmers and area.

Linda Keeling posed the question as to why the local farms are not composting as she buys so many bags from Agway. Rich and Ken explained that it takes a large amount of mass. About three years ago, Bard College, through a grant, considered a \$2 million facility to generate electricity but they wanted Ken to buy the generator as well as supply 400 acres of mass then pay him for so many kilowatts used. He declined getting involved. Ken did mention one farmer near Rt. 22 who charges for the roll-off, collects the manure then sells it but he wasn't sure if he was making a profit. Rich confirmed that a large mass is needed and his operation doesn't have much to spare as it is returned to the growing ground. Composting would also involve other agencies like DEC, etc. He also mentioned the letter from DEC stating a permit will be needed if a farmer uses over 100,000 gallons per month including tenant's houses. This is a new law as of February 15th. Linda added that was probably done to discourage hydro-fracking which uses vast amounts of water in its processing for gas. The farmers felt it is just another regulation to discourage farmers and the potential for more fees on the amount of water used. Ken noted

there will be a food safety plan requirement for the farm by 2013 or 2014. They want traceability back to the grower.

Norman Greig arrived making a quorum of five members. Rosemarie re-explained her proposal for Norman's benefit.

MOTION: *Norman Greig motioned that this is the kind of activity that farmers in Red Hook need to promote agriculture and endorses the brochure. Richard Biezynski seconded, all agreed.*

Norman would like this distributed throughout Dutchess County and felt it especially good if Dutchess Tourism picks up on it with the brochure in their racks.

Minutes from last month:

MOTION: *Norman motioned to accept the minutes, Rich seconded, all agreed.*

Norman Greig has submitted his resignation to Supervisor Crane because he felt his airstrip issue is a conflict of interest. She said she is holding his resignation because she wants him on the Committee and felt his permitting issue will be resolved shortly.

Other Business:

1. **Letter to Town Board:** The group felt a letter from the chair should be composed to the town board regarding amending the current zoning law to allow for Recreational Vehicles (RV) and Pop-up tent camping in the Agricultural Business District (ABD) as it increases agricultural revenues and the camping vehicles come and goes with the cover crop. It would also enhance the revenues of other businesses like restaurants, flower shops, antique stores, etc.

2. **Community Preservation Fund (CPF):** A town press release was read regarding the release of CPF funds for farmland protection. It was also mentioned that the West Kerley Corners Project used USDA money. Norman read the actual notice for the group. Discussion focused on what it means for the local farmers according to the created priority chart based on water, soils, etc. Pete explained it's a fairer process.

Adjournment: Co-Chairperson Pete Hubbell motioned to adjourn the meeting and Richard Biezynski seconded. All agreed. The meeting adjourned at 8:40 pm.

Next meeting: Monday, January 23, 2012, 7:00 pm, town hall. Speaker guest: Mary Kay Vrba.
Dutchess County Tourism

Respectfully submitted,

Linda J. Keeling, Secretary