**Agricultural Advisory Committee**

Meeting of March 20, 2019

Knox Town Hall

**Summary of Meeting**

Agenda

7:00 Convene

 Introduce new participants

 Old business

 How much farmland does Knox have?

 Website/Communications

 Technical Information

 Knox Farm Day Event

 Farm Transition

 New business

 Climate Resilience Grants NYSA&M

 Committee membership

 Discussion & Comments

9:00 Adjourn

 In attendance (in alphabetical order):

Jessica Gaige, Betty Ketcham, Gary Kleppel, Pam Kleppel , Jonathan Lane, Amy Pokorny, Joshua Rockwood, Ken Saddlemire, Brian Wilson

Topic

**Introduce new participants**. Jessica Gaige and Brian Wilson joined our group. We look forward to their participation and contributions.

**Old Business**

**Farmland in Knox** (Betty Ketcham). About 49% of the land in Knox is either agricultural or vacant; more detail next meeting.

**AAC Website & Communications** (Jonathan Lane). There was considerable discussion of the subject. The first question is whether we want to connect an AAC web-*page* to the Town of Knox web-*site,* or do we want a distinct AAC website.

The former option would cost little to create and maintain but would be limited in terms of scope and communication capacity. Furthermore, the current Knox website is not very user friendly. The latter option is more costly but would be more flexible, purpose-specific and user friendly.

Among the questions that arose was whether other municipalities had similar websites; if not and if other communities want to get onto our site, do we charge for access?

There was a suggestion that the website serve as a community bulletin board, hosting announcements and products for sale by farmers. This would allow farmers in town to connect with one another and make people (who often don’t know what is available from other producers) aware of what is being produced in Knox (and maybe surrounding communities).

Jonathan Lane’s company is producing software that may be pertinent to our web-service needs. He offered to make that tool available to the AAC/Town as a “pilot” (beta testing?) of the software.

The chair asked Jonathan to provide a formal presentation of his product for consideration by the committee at the next meeting. As he is unable to attend the next meeting, that presentation will be placed on the agenda for May.

**Technical Information** (Pam Kleppel). There are numerous events in the region that provide information of use or interest to the agricultural committee. Maggie Taylor and Pam Kleppel compiled a listing of some of these resources (see attached). The Town of Knox has hosted some events at Town Hall or at specific farms. We hope to continue doing this as it will draw attention to the Town and it’s interest in agriculture. The first such even will be a workshop on farm transition, probably in the fall of 2019. The initial steps in that direction are described below. The possibility of hosting a formal speakers’ series was raised and may be moved forward as we gauge interest in something like this in our town and in neighboring communities.

It was suggested that the committee create a e-mailing list of farmers, homesteaders and agri-business proprietors in the town to improve communications and awareness of the committee and its work and also to announce events that might be of interest to members of the agricultural community.

**Knox Farm Day Event** (Amy Pokorny and Josh Rockwood). It was suggested that the committee work with Emily Vincent at Two Rock Ranch in Berne, who will be hosting Family Farm Day (Sat. September 7th) and that we promote the Hilltowns Farms and Artisans Tour (September 7th & 8th). Over time, the AAC may consider hosting a farm day in Knox.

**Farm Transition** (Gary Kleppel & Ken Saddlemire). This is often a tough and emotional issue for longtime farmers in our community. Keeping land in agriculture is a key element of the AAC mission. The committee discussed the issue of farm transition at length and recognized it is multifaceted and complex. We realized that information and expertise need to be available to help farmers make decisions that fit their interests and individual situations. We also recognized that Knox is a community that offers opportunities for young farmers to transition into a farm. It was decided to schedule a meeting with Sandy Buxton (Cornell Cooperative Extension) who has expertise in farm transitioning\*. We also discussed setting up meetings with, Ag &Markets, Hudson Valley and AFT Farm Links, the National Young Farmers Coalition, and philanthropic organization that assist in farm transitioning.

**New Business.**

**Climate Resilience Grants.** Gary Kleppel mentioned that he had sent the grant announcement from NYS Ag & Markets and that he would explore this further. (I have been in touch with Albany County SWCS, which is overseeing proposals, and am awaiting their response.

**Committee Membership**. Official appointments will be made by the Town Board in April.

\*Ken and Gary met with Sandy on April 2nd. The notes from that meeting are forthcoming.

**This is the Technical Information Report provided by Maggie Taylor and Pam Kleppel**

**Agricultural Advisory Committee**

Technical Information Report – 03/30/19

(Presented by Maggie Taylor and Pam Kleppel)

* Audience
* Knox residents
* BKW
* Helderberg Hilltowns Association
* Resources and Events
* Albany Cornell Cooperative Extension: albany.cce.cornell.edu
* Albany County Ag Districts, Farmland Protection Plan, Farms & Farmers Markets: albanycounty.com/Government/Departments/Dept-EconomicDevelopment, Conservation and Planning
* Albany County Ag: albanycounty.com/Businesses/FarmsandAgriculture
* AlbanyCountyGIS (to look at your property, soil type, slope,& more): cha.maps.argis.com
* American Farmland Trust (connecting the next generation of farmers with land in NY (Hudson Valley Farmlink Network): farmland.org/initiatives/hudson-valley-farmlink-network
* Cornell  Small Farms:  smallfarms.cornell.edu
* Morning Ag Clips:  morningagclips.com
* NOFA NY: nofany.org
* NY Ag & Markets: agriculture.ny.gov
* NY Farm Bureau:  nyfb.org
* NY Soil Health: blogs.cornell.edu/soilhealthinitiative
* NYS Young Farmers Loan Forgiveness Incentive Program: hesc.ny.gov
* On Pasture online subscription: onpasture.com
* Savory Institute: savory.global
* SUNY Cobleskill (signup for farming conferences & workshops): web.cobleskill.edu/lfc
* USDA Grants:  usda.gov/topics/farming/grants-and-loans
* USDA New Farmers:  newfarmers.usda.gov
* WebSoil Survey:  websoilsurvey.sc.egov.usda.gov
* Agricultural Volunteer Opportunities
	+ - Tivoli Preserve Community Farm: tivolipreservecommunityfarm.org
		- Capital Roots: capitalroots.org
* Possible speakers/topics in Knox
	+ - Beekeeping
		- Transitioning farms/estate planning
		- Grazing/Pasturing/Holistic farm management
		- Agro-tourism/Agro-tainment
		- Homesteading
* Venue for speakers
	+ - Octagon Barn
		- Knox Town Hall
* How to disseminate information
	+ - Knox town website
		- Knox town newsletter
		- The Enterprise/The Spotlight
* Possible budgetary needs
	+ - Advertising speakers/events in The Enterprise & The Spotlight