

Agricultural Issues Committee Meeting
10/17/22, 7:30 PM at the Hamden Office

In Attendance:

Fred Kuhn, Chair, Carolyn Scobie, Recording Secretary, Kirk Fletcher, Vanessa Merrill-Wickham, Rich Toebe, April Wright-Lucas, Dale Dewing, Ben Hepler, James Romack,
Attending via Zoom: Carla Crim, Corrine Tompkins

The meeting was called to order at 7:30 PM, recorded

Lack of a quorum was noted. Any business that would require a vote, and review of the minutes from August 8, 2022, will be deferred to the next meeting

Staffing update:

The Search for an Executive Director is on track. Applications have closed and preliminary review of applications has begun. The timeline anticipates an offer to be made by November 18th, with the successful applicant to begin by the end of the year.

The Farm Management position is being updated to better reflect job expectations. A lesson learned with Jessica's short tenure. Anticipate the job being posted as Senior Resource Educator. Hope to have in place before the new Executive Director begins.

Karen Graves is retiring. She will work part-time to assist the transition of the new E.D.

The new E.D. will hire a new Administrative Support person

Noted- the need for additional administrative and marketing assistance- part-time

Farm Enhancement Grant:

There were 87 applications, 26 were funded. There was an unfortunate number of incomplete applications. They were impressed with the types of projects to be funded. After scoring and review they met with the ARP (American Rescue Plan) Committee regarding more resources. Economic Development had extra money and an additional \$500,000 in ARP funding was secured. All ARP funds have now been allocated. Round 2 (for the additional \$500,000) will be open until October 31st. Worthy applications that were incomplete were encouraged to re-submit their application, with an opportunity to edit any part of the application. May also receive new applications in round 2. Successful applicants will be shared with the staff, etc. No list will be posted in a newspaper. The majority of applicants were dairy farms, but benefits were not skewed towards dairy. Based on COVID relief "How did the pandemic affect your farm?" Dairy had a clear impact. Funding requires liability insurance. CCE and WAC must do the vouchers correctly and coordinate with the county.

Corrine noted that Ag awareness was raised at the County level. Delaware County IDA- Jim Thompson on the review committee. If you applied and received on round 1 you could not receive on round 2. Only one funded project per farm allowed.

Educational Programming:

Dairy tour- Good, but different. Happy with how it went, even though Marianne was not there to organize it. There are fewer farms and it's harder to put a tour together.

Sheep and Goat Symposium- 40-50 present. Rich noted that there were a couple of sheep producers from Delaware County.

Pasture Walk and Forage Walk

Beef Quality and Assurance training – resulted in 10 being BQA certified, lots of good sharing

ADG Convention- an increase in the number of production dairy goats on forage – they eat 8% of their body weight. The challenge is to get enough protein in their diet

Family Farm Days- 8 farms in Delaware County participated. Birdsong had lots of people (250?)
Due to retirement, there was no last-minute push to support and promote. One farm reported a slow turnout, but all attendees were there for the first time.

Corn Dry Down Days- Stamford was a rainy day but successful, although slow. A higher percentage in Franklin was ready to go. Not much change in the 10 days between Franklin and Stamford. After the rain the corn started growing again and kernels filled out. Some gravelly spots suffered a lot. Bears are bad, in the corn before the kernels were out- nuisance permits issued.

Upcoming Programming:

Carla- One month into Master Gardener program, 29 participants and trainees, active in their own communities. The dynamic of the group is changing. Topic line up of insects and plant diseases.

Seed to Supper, low budget program continues

Community Gardens, flourishing with volunteer support

Working on a garden bed/hoop house at the school

Cut Flower Farming- providing education and support. 5 or 6 classes, with 12 weeks total classes-

Webinars for core series

Livestock Programming- Upcoming, Saturday October 22nd, Pasture Walk on Roses Brook. Holscher's cow/calf operation, transition to weekly rotation. Utilized bale grazing for 1 month through the dry spell. Will be discussing outcomes with the farm owner

October 25th- Jim Gray farm, corn fields. One year ago, soil health test thru Cornell. Review soils on this date in the "aftermath" of the corn harvest. Field scouting, weed ID of what's left, fertility and nutrient management planning. Will be going over the planter and making adjustments.

Catskill Ag Conference- new coordinator at SUNY Delhi. Dale is confident that the conference will be around January 11-12, 2023

PPD- Dairy Pricing structure- has been explained in many ways, but still feels like someone is jiggering the price

How to use and read the computers on new equipment. New technology, big computers is a bigger challenge than the mechanical parts

CNY- Nicole Tommell, will offer classes in the county over the winter. Willing to talk about business management. Dairy Farm business summary (Mariane Kiraly used to do this for/with farmers. Nicolle could help). Tax schools were well attended in January, online classes start in November. Identify opportunities.

April wants feedback on newsletters- Dairy, Livestock and Horticulture. *Membership is dwindling.

Noted that Mariane would get everyone caught up at the Ag Conference

It was noted that CADE is offering Business Planning workshops at the end of October. They are "competition" but the material is relevant and it's not bad to direct people to it. Carla noted that CADE is "hipper" than we are. We are currently down on staffing, and there are ongoing discussions on improvement- newsletter, etc.

Watershed Program Updates

Precision Feed Management update- have been working on a new mineral blend for beef cattle. The cows like it and clean it up. Working on a model diet for beef cattle, bridging the gap for feed plans PFM had a station at Albano Farms, about 50 people, including Ag Committee and Regulators attended the WAC Annual Committee Tour. Highlighted calf management and ProDairy. WAC has a new position for PFM assistant. Beef PFM was listed in WAC Annual report, "Good news to share"

Next Meeting date TBD in January, Possibly MLK day?

Need a committee member. Bring to the attention of the Nominating committee. Clarify date of Annual Business meeting November/ December?. Fred is finishing his second term, so will be off the committee next year. Vanessa 2nd year, check status of other members.

Meeting adjourned at 9:29PM

Respectfully submitted by Carolyn Scobie