**Knox Agricultural Advisory Committee**

**Meeting of April 17, 2019**

**Knox Town Hall**

**Meeting Summary**

Committee members present – Jessica Gaige, Gary Kleppel, Joshua Rockwood

Committee members absent – Jay Francis, Brian Wilson,

7:00 Convene

Old business

How much farmland does Knox have?

Betty Ketcham

Website/Communications

Gary Kleppel

Knox Farm Day Event

Amy Pokorny & Josh Rockwood

Farm Transition

Gary Kleppel & Ken Saddlemire

New business

2017 Census of Agriculture

Gary Kleppel

Committee membership

Ken Saddlemire & Earl Barcomb

Climate Resilience Grants NYSA&M

Gary Kleppel

Discussion & Comments

8:45 Adjourn

**Summary of Meeting**

**Old business –**

**How much farmland is in the Town of Knox** – Betty Ketcham, using agricultural and vacant lands in a land class assessment, reported that the Town of Knox contains 8,560 acres of agricultural land and 4,761 acres of vacant land. Using 26,726.4 acres as the land area of Knox (not including water), agricultural land = 32.02% of Knox’s land, and vacant land = 17.93% of Knox’s land. Therefore, 49.95% of the land in Knox is currently listed as agricultural or vacant. It would seem that there are substantial opportunities for farmers to begin farms or to take over farms from operators hoping to stop farming but keep their land in agricultural use.

**Website Communications –** Jessica Gaige talked about the newly upgraded Farm Bureau website, pointing out that it is much easier to use than the old site and that she will report back to us regarding its use by members.

Pam Kleppel suggested that the Agricultural Advisory Committee needs a page on the Town’s website. At the very least, the page should include a listing of committee members. We should also find out if we can use the page to create a community bulletin board. Gary Kleppel offered to talk to Town Clerk Schanz about these matters.

Regarding the creation of a larger, more complex site, Ken Saddlemire reported that Supervisor Lefkaditis does not wish to spend money on an expensive website for this committee. The chair of this committee has invited Jonathan Lane to make a presentation to committee describing the website software that his company is developing (as he described briefly at the March meeting). At this time, he has not gotten back to the chair regarding this invitation.

**Farm Day Event –** Amy Pokorny and Joshua Rockwood are leading on this. The event will take place on Sunday, September 8th at Emily Vincent’s Two-Rock Ranch in Berne. Volunteers are needed to help with the event. There was support by those present for the AAC to coordinate with Two-Rock Ranch and the Hilltown Farms and Artisans Tour (September 7th & 8th) to bring attention to the committee and agriculture in Knox. We will ask Amy Pokorny and Joshua Rockwood to continue to take the lead on this effort.

**Farm Transition –** Gary Kleppel and Ken Saddlemire discussed a meeting they had with Sandy Buxton of Cornell Cooperative Extension (CCE) on April 2nd to learn about the programs CCE offers to assist farmers hoping to retire and to transition their farms to family members or other farmers. This is a complex topic and even though several tools are available, each case is unique. Support for needs to be available on an individual basis. Among the principal results of the meeting and the discussion about it at the April AAC meeting was that this fall the AAC should sponsor a workshop on farm transition, where farmers can learn about tools and resources for transitioning farmland from CCE, Farm Bureau (through Nationwide’s Land is your Legacy), American Farmland Trust (Hudson Valley Farm Link), the Farmland Protection Program (NYS Ag & Markets) and the National Young Farmers Coalition. The participants at the AAC meeting agreed that people who attend the workshop should have access to an attorney or other expertise to help work out the details of their personal transition. The AAC will look into how to make this happen.

**New Business –**

**Census of Agriculture –** The 2017 Census of Agriculture was released in April. Gary Kleppel discussed a few aspects of the census (attached). Jessica Gaige reported on a more detailed analysis conducted by Farm Bureau (attached). One of the interesting aspects of the census is that 22% of the farms in Albany County and 30% of the farms in New York are beginning farms (in operation for 10 years or less). This would suggest that there are a significant number of young and beginning farmers in our state and county. The census also shows that there are 6718 farmers <35 yrs old in NY and that 3925 of these are principals on there farms. That means that there 2793 are not principals. Some of these folks may being looking to buy their own farms (i.e., become principals) soon. In Albany County, 22 farmers under 35 years are not principals. (Personal comment: Wouldn’t it be nice if some of these young farmers came to Knox and purchased some of the vacant or ag land from which the farmer wants to retire, and began farming?)

**Committee Membership –** Ken Saddlemire reported that the Town Board has appointed the following individuals as members of the AAC: Brian Wilson, Jessica Gaige, Jay Francis and Joshua Rockwood. The name of one additional appointee, who may have business with the Town of Knox or the AAC, was removed from the appointees’ list to avoid potential conflicts of interest.

**Climate Resilient Farming Grants –** Gary Kleppel described the subject grants. All members of the committee and community members on the AAC mailing list received a copy of the RFP. They will fund Best Management Practices to meet challenges associated with climate change.

Submitted on May 3, 2019 by Gary Kleppel