

MEETING NOTES

Catawba County Farm & Food Sustainability Plan

Working Committee

June 14, 2012

COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:

Barbara Beatty, John Brzorad, Jeff Carpenter, Kristie Gilbert, Martha Green, Clarence Hood, Nathan Huret, Tom Kenney, Al King, Jeremy Lee, July Lehmann and Danny Montgomery

OTHER STAKEHOLDERS

Chris Bartleson, City of Newton Planning Director and Larry Williams, Soil & Water Conservation District

STAFF PRESENT:

Mary George and Susan Ballbach, Planning, Parks, and Development

WELCOME & FOLLOW-UP FROM LAST MEETING

Mary George welcomed the members of the Working Committee and other guests. She provided information to the Committee about a question that was raised at the last meeting regarding how a farm is defined for the United State Agricultural Census. The Census is sent to farmers that produce and sell \$1,000 or more of agricultural products per year. The Census uses source lists from State and Federal government programs, producer associations, seed growers, pesticide application, veterinarians and marketing associations to mail the Census form to farmers for them to fill out and return.

NATIONAL TRENDS & CASE STUDIES FOR SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE

Mary introduced Quint Redmond, a consultant who is assisting the County on its Farm & Food Sustainability Plan. Mr. Redmond's consulting business is located in Colorado where he has put many of his ideas into action, such as school community gardens. He will be contributing information on national trends and submit case studies for incorporation into the County's plan.

Quint's presentation included a variety of topics including, his "Agriburbia" concept, energy consumption, the farm/health connection, local food supply chain, research/development and sustainability.

Quint described his Agriburbia concept which allows for a new type of residential development community that is centered around a working farm. The residents have access to the farm produce and can experience life on the farm. There are over 5,000 acres of Agriburbia projects approved nationwide, with one being located in Granite Quarry, NC which is waiting for additional funding to begin construction.

Quint discussed the idea of metabolic farming, a non-petroleum based, minimally mechanized method which yields more produce per square foot. He shared information about the energy input for growing vegetables/fruits in western states vs. locally, relating it to calories expended. There is generally a 10:1 petroleum caloric ratio which means it takes 10 times the amount of caloric energy to produce, package and transport a farm product compared to the 1 caloric energy for the consumed product. He gave an example that a box of mixed salad greens takes 4,600 calories to produce and ship to the East Coast where it only provides 80 calories for the consumer. In this regard, he commented that locally grown produce will "trump" organically grown.

Quint stated that through his work he is proposing a goal of having 30 million farmers in the country who can make a living off of the farm (min. \$80,000/year income). He noted that truck farmers can do well off of 2-3 acres of land and that it can support one full time employee. He suggested that the next generation of companies looking to locate in a county will be asking if the area has enough agricultural land to support itself- i.e. the concept of "food security." Local governments don't need to only look to rural land for agricultural uses. A commercial site can be leased for farmland and once development is ready to return it can easily go back to commercial land.

Quint described his success in working with the Denver, CO public school system. The schools had a landscape maintenance contract for the grassed areas around the schools. Quint suggested that they put the land to use as contract farming. Instead of paying for someone to mow the property, they now pay his company to plant the land in fruits and vegetables. Additional benefits are that the students can assist with the farm, grow healthy food for the school cafeterias and sell excess food which provides a source of revenue for other projects. This in turn creates a \$35,000-\$40,000 job for every 2-3 acres of intensive agriculture. The Chafee County school district is now self-fed with vegetables it grows on school property. It takes around 55 acres to grow the fresh vegetables it needs. The school district is now investing in its own freezing/canning mobile unit to process the produce grown during the

summer months. He suggested that this could be a model; whereby, the farmer takes a contract with the schools to farm the property without a risk to himself.

Quint then discussed the concept of the community food fraction. This is an exercise where a county calculates its fruit and vegetable caloric need based upon the most recent Census demographics. This amount of “need” is then compared to the amount being locally produced; thereby, identifying the gap. This is a tool which will then allow the county to evaluate its codes, policies and land area to see how to promote increased food production.

Quint’s detailed presentation can be found on the County’s Farm & Food Sustainability Plan website at: <http://www.catawbacountync.gov/planning/Sustainability/A-Burb%20Show.pdf>

COMMUNITY MEETINGS SCHEDULE AND FORMAT

Mary passed out a draft agenda for the community meetings. She stressed the importance of getting the word out about the meetings since this information will be critical in the development of the Plan’s recommendations. There will be 3 community meetings: one at Foard, Bandys and Bunker Hill high schools. The tentative schedule is for two meetings to be held the week of July 9 and the other one during the week of July 23. Mary indicated she would get the dates to the Committee as soon as they were approved by the schools. The Committee discussed different means of getting the word out including information on the Catawba County schools web site. With the community meetings being held in July, the next meeting of the Working Committee will be in mid-August.

Respectfully submitted,

Mary George, Project Manager