

Schoharie County Planning & Development Agency



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Seward and Carlisle Agricultural Committee Meeting
June 22, 2009 -- Schoharie County Planning office

Attendance:

Committee: Linda Cross, Larry Phillips, Mac Holmes, Richard Bates, Michelle Linane, Peter Bent, Larry Bradt

Consultant: Laura Ten Eyck

County: Michele Strobeck, Zach Thompson

Presenter: David Cox, Cornell Cooperative Extension

Audience:

Meeting started at 7:06.

Mac moved to approve the minutes from the May meeting; seconded by Peter and carried unanimously.

The interview summary will be completed shortly and emailed to the committee after they have been read by David Haight of AFT.

A new timeline for the Plans was introduced by Laura. Peter asked if it was realistic and Laura honestly answered that it was probably not, the process will almost certainly take longer, but the deadline is flexible (previously confirmed by John Brennan of NYS Ag. and Markets).

Laura asked about any progress that may have been made regarding Seward's upcoming Land Use Survey and she was informed that there will be a meeting on this matter Tuesday, June 30 at the Seward Town Building. Representatives from the Planning department will be there to share knowledge of prior experience creating surveys and the aim is for a survey to be decided upon to allow for being sent out to residents soon after.

Brian Fleury of the SCPDA provided Seward with maps showing ag. exemptions and parcel boundaries (with parcels numbered) for their inventory of active agriculture. Seward was broken into quadrants to allow for greater detail to make identification easier.

David Cox presents the Town of Charlton's draft Ag. Protection Plan, citing some statistics that are poorly worded and either misleading or incorrect. He discussed the format and the options it presented for Seward and Carlisle as a model when including their own agricultural statistics in their respective plans. David also encouraged the committee to consider a statistic regarding the percentage of "marginal" lands in each town (lands that don't meet the criteria for "prime" soils or "soils of statewide significance) that would be viable for grazing, biomass, etc. This number would

have to be estimated based on local knowledge provided by the committee, the Department of Soil and Water, and elsewhere.

Mac wondered aloud if there should be other categories for soils.

Linda was excused at 7:45 for another commitment.

A discussion of goals began. Michelle expressed concern over the goals being finalized before the interview summary had been read by the committee but was assured that the goals are general in nature and can be revisited and modified as we move forward and start coming up with the more specific strategies and recommendations (as they are an important, ever-changing aspect of the goals). The plan needs to support existing farmers, retain a critical mass of ag. land (Schoharie Land Trusts?), be flexible enough to allow for a variety of economic opportunities (because it's never certain where they will come from or what they will be, i.e. gas drilling and wind turbines), cultivate the future generations of farmers, primarily via education of local youths (through such programs as 4-H and FFA).

Mac said that the goals should be both broad and agreeable to the general public. If they are too specific the strategies and recommendations may be met with ire.

Mac motioned to adopt Bethlehem's goals for the Seward and Carlisle plans; seconded by Michelle. A discussion started about perhaps blending the goals that Laura brought and Bethlehem's (because Bethlehem's goals were considered closer to strategies/recommendations than goals as we have defined them). The vote died and it was decided that Laura will work on combining ideas from both sets and the new goals will be finalized at the July meeting.

Meeting adjourned at 8:59.

For the Next Meeting:

Active Ag. Inventory

Goals/Strategies

Land Use Plan Survey - Seward