

AGRICULTURAL AND FARMLAND PRESERVATION COMMITTEE
Wednesday, June 23, 2010

Committee members Present:

Mark Stolzenburg
Vicky McCaffrey
Reta Youngs
Karl Wesphal
Ed Thornton

Also Present

Laurie TenEyeck, Field Consultant, American Farmland Trust
Jean Burton, Secretary
Michelle Strobeck, Schoharie County Planning and Development Agency
John Sanchirico, town board liaison

Minutes: Minutes from previous meetings were reviewed and approved as follows:
1/27 meeting – 1st by Vicky, 2ed by Reta - all voted yes
2/24 meeting – 1st by Reta, 2ed by Vicky – all voted yes

Public hearing – Laura outlined the how the committee can choose to respond to the many comments at the 4/19 and 5/24 public hearings. The committee can: 1) ask the town board to vote on the plan as it is, 2) include Nan's comments in the appendix and ask the town board to vote then, 3) go page by page through the written comments and decide how to address each one. If there are many substantial changes the committee might need another public hearing. Vicky said that most of Nan's suggestions were good and should be considered and that none of the changes are major in intent. Nan was looking for specifics not major changes. Vicky prefers not to include the comments in the appendix since it would appear that the "job isn't done." John agreed with Vicky. Ed feels that if there are many changes, then public needs to be notified. The committee decided to review all the written comments and decide how/if to incorporate them into the final version of the plan.

Nan comments were reviewed as shown below, using the numbering in her comments.

1. How does the ag plan relate to the comprehensive plan or does it stand alone? No action by committee needed. Maybe coordination could happen at five year review of comp plan and the ag plan could be used as an addendum at that time
2. Making a list of acronyms would be useful, perhaps included as an appendix.
3. Vision statement – include dairy in vision statement as well as throughout plan. Committee decided not to be more specific and that the introduction and summary is sufficient in describing a vision. The committee also felt that dairy is sufficiently mentioned in the plan. Michelle may add some more about dairy in the economic section.
4. What to ask/expect from County/State. John Brennen suggested that this might facilitate advocacy in the future. The committee decided to insert a paragraph

- seeking assistance from county/state to create new markets, new processing, farmer assistance. The plan does specify reaching out to county in various places. Nan is recommending a direct paragraph. Laura/Michelle offered to summarize current references to county/state support/assistance with a possible reference to Four Partners report.
5. Definition of agriculture. Committee spent lots of time with definition at previous meetings. Committee wants to keep it as is for the purposes of the ag plan.
 6. Prioritizing farmland. Historically the committee intentionally decided not to delve into this. The reason to specify priority lands was to apply for PDR grants, which is a remote possibility for land in the Town of Wright. Karl sees this as a central issue, to protect the “better” farmland. Vicky sees plan recommendations apply to all parcels, not one over another (prioritization). The committee decided not to address this issue further in the plan.
 7. Conversion pressure – It would be very difficult to obtain even the number of building permits, as this data is not available. The committee decided not to make any changes.
 8. Future of farming – Laura indicated that this information was gleaned from farmer interviews and that might be cited better. A list of “serious challenges” is not needed.
 9. Critical mass of ag land – Laura indicated that this definition would differ from place to place and does not need a specific definition in the ag plan. A definition specific to the Town of Wright would involve too much and cost too much but something very general could be inserted. She suggested including a general statement/definition of concept.
 10. Goal 1 – The committee decided no change was needed.
 11. Assessment code – The committee decided that a chart of codes in the appendix and definitions could be included in the text.
 12. The committee indicated that this was all ready done
 13. Do we want the ag plan to outline what the state expects from Planning Board and ZBA? In the plan the Ag committee is to encourage/ensure that the Planning board and ZBA are doing their jobs.
 14. Same as 13
 15. Right to farm law - The committee feels that the plan includes a recommendation to address this and no change is needed.
 16. Road safety – The committee feels the ag committee has addressed this under the plan. Bridges was considered part of roads but could be specified.
 17. Simple revision - Farm Link as an example not an exclusive option.
 18. Nan wants strategy moved to first year for Goal III.1 (brochure), Festival in the first three years, Ag Awareness Week in first five years. The committee saw this a realistic.
 19. The committee wants to leave this issue as is with no change
 20. Plan should not do this since it relates to laws.
 21. Use the term “purpose statement” – the committee agreed
 22. Conservation subdivision – The committee agreed that a picture could explain more clearly cluster vs. conservation and rewording the definition would be helpful. Possible appendix addition.

23. The committee felt that no more detail is needed
24. Signage – The committee deleted the first sentence, and deleted more in second sentence.
25. No change
26. SWOT- The committee will add a definition.
27. to 34. Nan refers to AFT review of regulations not included in ag plan.
Committee decided to leave as is.

Other comments made at the public hearings were very positive. Comments at the board meeting were comments on agriculture in general, not about the plan.

Laura will incorporate all recommendations for next meeting. John will investigate what the law says about adoption of such a plan after changes to see if another public hearing is required.

Next meeting July 28th 7PM