

**TOWN OF WRIGHT
AGRICULTURAL
COMMITTEE**

AGRICULTURAL AND FARMLAND PRESERVATION COMMITTEE

October 22, 2008

MARK STOLZENBURG
Chair

872-0679

VICKY MCCAFFREY

872-1295

JERI MURRAY

295-7280

ED THORNTON

295-7463

KARL WESTPHAL

872-1687

RETA YOUNGS

872-0919

JOHN SANCHIRICO

TOWN BOARD

872-9287

RAYMOND LURHMAN

872-2375

Committee Members Present:

Jeri Murray,
Mark Stolzenburg
Ed Thornton
Reta Youngs
Karl Wesphal

Also Present:

Lee Pratt, Schoharie County Planning
Laurie Ten Eyck, Field Consultant, American Farmland Trust
Jean Burton, secretary

Review of Minutes of 9/24/2008

Motion to approve: 1st Ed, Reta 2ed, approved

Interviews: Laura reports that interviews are going well. She feels the exchanges have been very productive and generated good discussion. People are positive and open to talking about planning issues. From the list she still has three individuals who have postponed interviews or not responded. Mark asked the committee to give Laura direction in how to proceed to complete the interviews. In general the committee is moving along well and shouldn't feel time pressure. Committee members agreed to speak with the individuals on the list to encourage them to participate. If there is still no response, the committee directed Laura to proceed with two alternates, Richard Gage and William Goodrich. Laura is hoping to have interviews completed by the next meeting and she will work to have a summary of these interviews completed.

Maps: Lee brought several maps, which were used at the public meeting as well as some maps from the town's comprehensive plan done several years ago. The older maps depicted conditions that don't change such as soils. Reta noted some errors on the maps. Lee explained that some maps are based on assessor codes, which may not be correct or may not truly reflect land use for the committee's purposes. The new assessor will need address this issue. The committee will need to review the maps carefully. Lee pointed out that acreage that includes a building might be classified as residential even though a large portion of that acreage is agricultural. He suggested that the map showing the agricultural district and agricultural tax exemptions best reflects where agriculture is occurring.

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Lee pointed out that the Land Evaluation Site Assessment map, which was used for the comprehensive plan was focusing on land development which is a different emphasis from this committee which will be focusing on preserving farmland in the midst of development. Lee pointed out that the town has no zoning but instead uses site plan review to consider landowner issues/plans that may effect the whole town. This process is meant to be advisory and offering suggestions, rather than rigid requirements. This committee will be emphasizing the importance of farmland to the country as a whole and specifically to the town. Levying taxes needs to be fair but can also be incentives to preserve farmland and limit development of that land. Lee provided several examples from other towns of challenges to farmland protection and the use of easements.

Public Meeting: Laura shared her thoughts that the public meeting went well, the number of people attending was good, people openly shared and reflected a cooperative community atmosphere. Asking the assessor to appear at the end of the meeting was well accepted and seemed to fit in and added to the committee's role of advocacy for farmers. Committee members agreed with this. Laura indicated that some individuals who she interviewed after the meeting were very positive about it also. Farmers are concerned about negative attitudes about farmers and this meeting was seen as appreciation for farmers. Committee members indicated interest from the community to have another such meeting. This might best occur during the winter and before the committee completes its draft report. This way further ideas can be incorporated into the report.

Next Meeting: Laura asked the committee to focus on formulating goals and objectives at the next meeting. Laura has provided the committee with the Right to Farm Law. She will also review the County Economic Summit, the town's comprehensive plan and site plan review law to see if the committee's goals might work in concert with these efforts.

Future meetings fall on Thanksgiving and Christmas Eve. The committee decided to move the meetings of November and December to the third Wednesday 11/ 19 and 12/17. Mark will check for conflicts with other town committee meetings and will confirm this schedule via email.