

# AGRICULTURAL AND FARMLAND PRESERVATION COMMITTEE

Thursday, October 29, 2009

## 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

Lillian Bruno, Schoharie County Planner  
John Sanchirico, town board liaison

Approve minutes –Vicky moved to approve minutes from the August meeting. Ed seconded. All approved. Ed moved to approve minutes from the September meeting. Vicky seconded. All approved.

Review and revise recommendations under Goal #5 Encourage New Economic Opportunities for Farmers - Goals #1 through #4 were reviewed and revised at the last meeting. Goal #5 was reviewed in full. Laurie stressed that recommendations and strategies should look forward to make specific situations friendly to farmers in the future, such as specifying various types of ancillary businesses allow. The committee suggested the idea of providing a consultant to guide farmers who want to switch over to direct marketing. This service might come from Ag and Markets, Cornell Cooperative Extension, or an Ag marketing specialist on the county level. This might include contracts with local retailers.

Laurie has a draft of the final report that she is working on and making changes to reflect discussion at meetings. She will incorporate tonight's comments and then she will email the draft to all committee members. This will be several weeks before the November meeting so the committee can review it. Prioritization appears less important and the report seems to hold together and not need prioritization. John Brennen focused on land use recommendations, less concerned about economic impact etc. Laurie feels all recommendations are important, not just land use. The draft is meeting all criteria of the grant and therefore it should be approved by the Commissioner of Ag and Markets. Once the committee is satisfied with the report it needs to be available to the public 30 days prior to public hearing. At that time Laurie will place copies in places for public review. This can be announced on the town website.

Discussion of SEQR as a tool for protecting agricultural land – Laurie shared a case where SEQR was used to protect farmland, but it appeared very complex. Wright has Karst areas designated Critical Environmental Area (CEA). Much of the prime farmland overlays the Karst. These aspects are included in the maps in the report. Barton Hill watershed is also an important resource in the town. The watershed and Karst are existing designations for critical environmental resources. SEQR is not meant to

substitute for site plan review, which the town uses now. Farming DEC regulations already exist and SEQR would already come to play. Laurie will investigate what if any regulations already exist regarding development on Karst and what is enforced. Rather than designate farmland as a critical environmental area, the town might be well served by using areas already so designated and regulated.

Discussion of conservation subdivisions – Laurie shared information on conservation subdivisions that specify important resources and direct development to avoid these valuable resources. Conservation subdivision could offer a density bonus (one extra lot and/or smaller lot size). Since some areas are left untouched when a site is prepared, developers are interested in these types of subdivisions. Research says they are more economical since there is less infrastructure (few/shorter roads etc.) and houses are worth more and sell faster due to design aspects. When a subdivision is requested this idea could be applied to the Town of Wright by locating houses on less desirable soils, leaving prime soils for agriculture. Laurie will include this in the report.

Prioritization - Vicky noted that she tried to tackle this task. Laurie has her notes and will try to incorporate them into the draft. At the very least the order in which goals and strategies are listed could reflect priority.

**Next meeting 11/24, Tuesday, 7PM**