



Progress Report, 7/30/09
Town of Wright, Agriculture and Farmland Protection Plan

Next Meeting: August 26, 2009, 7:00 PM, Wright Town Hall, Gallupville, NY

Mapping

The map depicting active agricultural land is essentially complete. A total of 11,512 acres of active agricultural land in the Town of Wright have been identified. The committee has decided they want the map to show active agricultural land overlaid on an agricultural soils map. Lillian Bruno, planner for the Schoharie County Planning Department Agency (SCPDA) will ask Brian Fleury, the county's GIS specialist, to add the gas pipelines that exist within the Town borders to the map.

Economic Impact Study

Lillian, Michele Strobeck, agriculture marketing specialist for SCPDA, and David Cox, agriculture program leader for Cornell Cooperative Extension, Schoharie County are continuing work on the economic impact study. Upon communicating with the county department of real property tax services they have found that the original plan of looking at the amount of money generated in school taxes by agricultural land is proving to be more challenging than originally thought. The information will be difficult to obtain in a timely manner and may not be accurate. The town is located within the boundaries of three different school districts, which tax at different rates. Instead they will be analyzing the economic impact on the town and county of the conversion of active agricultural land to residential use. The group will meet in early August and then present their findings to the committee at the committee meeting at the end of the month.

Prioritizing Agricultural Land

The committee continued their discussion of the prioritization of agricultural land. They identified three general areas of the town in which there is active agriculture: northwest; east central; and south of the Fox Creek. They also discussed the sections of the town that inappropriate for farming such as wetlands, steep slopes, and areas where there is already extensive residential development. They asked Lillian to have the county to present the areas identified as in active agriculture as well as the areas completely unsuitable for agriculture depicted on a map for the committee to review.

Timeline

The committee reviewed a revised timeline for completion of the plan. The revised timeline ended with the submission of the plan to the town board for approval rather than the New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets (NYSDAM) which provided some additional time. John Brennan, from NYSDAM's Farmland Protection Program attended the meeting and advised the committee to apply now for an extension if there was any possibility that they would need one as it is taking a long time to have the extensions approved. He advised the committee to apply for a one year extension. The committee decided to go ahead with this and the extension application is in process. Although they are applying for an extension the committee would like to have the plan submitted to the town board in time for the board to approve it in 2009.

Draft Plan

The committee reviewed a working copy of a rough draft plan. John Brennan, who had had an opportunity to review the plan, emphasized the importance of brevity and prioritizing recommendations. He also told the committee they need to provide implementation strategies for each recommendation stating who will be responsible for implementing the recommendation, the timeframe, and how much it will cost. He said he will pass along a check list that has been developed that will be used by the NYSDAM Commissioner when approving the plans. Committee members provided initial feedback and will go over the plan in detail and bring their suggested revisions to the August meeting. Much of the material currently appearing within the body of the plan will become appendices.

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