

**TOWN OF WRIGHT  
AGRICULTURAL  
COMMITTEE**

**AGRICULTURAL AND FARMLAND PRESERVATION COMMITTEE**

**December 17, 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:

Karl Westphal  
Ed Thornton  
Ray Lurhman  
Mark Stolzenburg  
Jeri Murray,  
Reta Youngs

Also Present:: John Sancharico, town board Liaison  
Laurie Ten Eyck, Field Consultant, American Farmland Trust  
Lee Pratt, Schoharie County Planning  
Lillian Bruno, Schoharie County Planner  
Jean Burton, secretary

Review of Minutes of 11/19/2008. Motions to approve, 1<sup>st</sup> Ray, Ed 2ed, approved

Input from Schoharie County Cornell Cooperative Extension: on impact of agriculture in the town. Lee spoke to David Cox and Lee is confident that their material will be completed and available by the end of December.

Map accuracy: Lee sent out “travel” maps to all committee members. They reflect changes that were recently recommended. Maps 1 and 2 are of primary interest. The main objective is to identify land not in an agricultural district but involved in farming. Landowners can apply to be included in the agricultural district between Jan 30<sup>st</sup> and February 28<sup>th</sup> – open enrollment. Size and use and sometimes the location of the land are reviewed upon application. Approval is issued October of that year. Ray spoke about land he previously farmed and the land he currently farms. He felt that the soils maps might not be accurate. Lee mentioned several factors besides soil structure that could effect the classification such as bedrock. Mark would like the most accurate maps available for review at next public meeting so further corrections can be made. Lee indicated that the assessor map may not be beneficial to meet committee’s goals. The committee wants to best reflect current agriculture, not just tax status. Mark suggested group meeting in January to update the maps as best as the committee is able. This meeting will occur on Saturday 1/3/09 and Mark will make any further coordination via email.

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Karl noted map 2 is very inaccurate. Mark indicate it is just a starting point and may not be included in the public meeting as it is distracting from the committee's goals.

VICKY MCCAFFREY  
872-1295

Progress report: Laura submitted for review a progress report. Lee emphasized that this is the time to voice any concerns about the direction and completeness of the project. The committee made no comments.

JERI MURRAY  
295-7280

Interview Summary: Laura submitted a draft summary of the ten completed interviews. It included many quotes but none of the interviewees is identified. Laura indicated that if there is a point of view that is not reflected in these interviews, then the committee is welcome to submit comments via email to Laura. Mark felt the report was balanced and offered a variety of points of view.

ED THORNTON  
295-7463

Comprehensive Plan Survey Analysis: Laura submitted a draft, and pointed out that in the farming section the numbers are difficult to decipher. Laura requested that the committee review further all these documents for the next meeting. Laura expects to begin work on the plan draft by the end of January. Some components still need to be completed but some pages could be started.

KARL WESTPHAL  
872-1687

RETA YOUNGS  
872-0919

Definition of Agriculture: Laura presented various definitions used by the town in different areas. She also presented NYS Agriculture and Markets Law definition, which is used to define who can get an agricultural assessment. The committee wants to be more inclusive, particularly regarding small plots. The Ag and Markets definition is good for the broad range of activities included. The committee expressed interest in being inclusive and broad in the definition. All activity that contributes to the agricultural economy is important, both large and small.

JOHN SANCHIRICO  
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Committee members discussed these various definitions. Overall the committee agreed that the comprehensive plan's definition is more inclusive than the Ag and Market definition. It was agreed that this definition has no tied benefits such as lower taxes. By developing a database of agricultural activity, a network of support and assistance could possibly be created. Laura will develop a definition from this evening's comments and based on the comprehensive plan. She will provide that to the committee for review.

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Goals discussion: Laura referred to hand outs from last meeting. She provided suggested goals for discussions. The committee focused on the following:

- *Support and Maintain Working farms:* It is important to provide opportunities to express appreciation for farmers. This would include welcoming newcomers and orienting them to farming culture in the town.
- *Encouraging new farmers:* by sharing information and education.
- *Protecting Farmland:* The committee sees this as very important goal.

It was noted that the strategy of “Economic Development “– increased profitability, is totally up to farmer – not the town and should not be part of the plan. “Preserve Rural Character & Quality of Life” is a result of this project, not a goal unto itself. Laura will revise and present next month this list of goals based on this evening’s discussion.

To do List for January Meeting 1/28/09

Committee members available on 1/3 will meet to review maps.

Laura will provide outline of goals for discussion based on this evening’s discussion.

Plan public meeting in February 12<sup>th</sup> 7:30PM. John will look into booking the Gallupville House. Lillian will send out postcards. The town board will be invited so that they will hear all comments.

Lee shared with the group that he will no longer be serving as Ag Marketing Specialist, for Schoharie County. Lillian will take Lee’s place as of 1/1/09. The committee shared their appreciation for Lee’s contributions and wished him well.