

AGRICULTURAL AND FARMLAND PRESERVATION COMMITTEE

June 24, 2009

Committee members Present:

Mark Stolzenburg

Reta Youngs

Karl Wesphal

Vicki McCaffery

Ed Thornton

Also Present:

Laurie Ten Eyck, Field Consultant, American Farmland Trust

John Sancharico, town board Liason

Jean Burton, secretary

Michele Strobeck, County Ag Marketing specialist

Lillian Bruno, Schoharie County Planner

David Cox, of Schoharie County Cooperative Extension

Review of minutes of 5/27/09 – Motion to approve by Ed Thornton, 2ed by Reta Youngs, all approved

Economic Impact Study – David Cox, CCE, Passed out a draft of worksheet and a current Ag district review. He has been focusing on structure and definitions to be used in the report such as Prime Farmland, Farmland of Statewide importance, Farmland of local importance. The report done in 2003 by Farmland Protection Board contained some info that can be used though it was completed before the economic downturn. The data is county wide and not applicable to town level. Michele reported that the county lost 5 dairy farms this year. 114 acres were added to Ag district this past year in town. It is unclear if additional rental acreage has been added. David is seeking guidance on the type of report committee is looking for. He included fiscal impact reports from Charlton and Parma for comparison. It is difficult to use census data due to several large zip codes with the town.

Lillian brought the map that contains the data that the committee has gathered. This data can be incorporated into a narrative report and analysis. Lillian will email the map along with an aerial map so the committee can review for accuracy. Ag district and Ag exemptions are correct. Committee needs to review for acreage that is in production but not in the Ag district. David will begin an analysis, which can be adjusted if committee finds errors. Map will remain in town hall. A draft of economic impact for Town of Wright presented. Committee asked to review and send comments to Laura by 7/3 and then she will relay them to David and Lillian.

Timeline – Laura provided a timeline listing committee meetings and basic objectives for each meeting. The project needs to be completed within two years of grant award. The deadline is 1/7/10 including

approval by the town. Extensions can be requested and are usually granted. This timeline is aimed to meet the deadline. Since public meeting needs to be in Sept to meet grant deadline, and Sept is a very busy time for farmers, the committee considered asking for an extension now so that a public meeting could be held in early winter when farmers are more available. Michele indicated that an additional 60 days could be considered without an official extension. Laura will confirm this. Jon indicated that pushing completion later, the report will meet a new board due to elections and this might complicate things. The town board meeting in January is informational only and no other business can be considered. Timeline decisions will be confirmed next meeting and deciding whether to apply for an extension. Public meeting might best be scheduled after elections to keep issue out of politics. Committee will work to complete the report in a timely fashion and decide later when to schedule public meeting etc. If major revisions are requested at a public meeting, then a second public meeting will need to be scheduled, and an extension of several months would be needed.

Prioritization of Agricultural Lands Laura shared with the committee an email exchange from John Brennan to Lillian. This offered examples of how other towns have approached prioritization. This issue needs to be addressed in the plan. It is important and can be controversial. A system of prioritization could be decided later. It is not required in the plan but the issue needs to be mentioned. No PDR grants have been awarded in Schoharie. Prioritization comes into play if/when a farmer applies for a PDR grant. Prioritizing land can be referred to in a comprehensive plan and effect directions of development. Laura will condense comments and compose several options to be discussed next time.

AFT Tool Box Addendum – Recommendations for Goal 2 and 3 - Laura presented these recommendations and strategies which incorporate committee ideas, comments as well as ideas from the public meetings.

Review of Regulations - Laura provided her review of regulations of land use ordinances, which need to be included in the final report. Town regulations are very out dated such as in the Site plan review law: Problems begin in the definitions. No definition for agriculture. Comp plan will be reviewed in two years and Ag/Farm recommendations could be included at that time. The committee shared concerns and reactions. Laura will make further revisions for presentation next meeting.

Next meeting – July 22