



**Progress Report
Agriculture and Farmland Protection Plan Development**

**Towns of Seward and Carlisle
April 29, 2009**

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Farmer and Landowner Interviews

Although Laura had hoped to have the interviews completed by the end of April there were some cancellations and scheduling conflicts. Only four interviews remain to be done, two in each town. Laura is beginning work on the interview summaries. The last few interviews will be conducted as soon as the farmers become available. Overall the interview process has been very successful. A wide variety of individuals gave generously of their time. Laura plans to have a draft interview summary available by the May meeting.

Public Meetings

The Carlisle public meeting was held on March 18th at 7:00 PM at the Carlisle Fire House. Twenty-five individuals from the community attended as well as committee members and facilitators. Town Supervisor Larry Bradt gave an introduction and then Linda Cross, agriculture and farmland protection plan committee chairperson, spoke to the audience about the state grant funding the plan and how the committee is going about developing the plan. Laura Ten Eyck led the group in a discussion of the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) regarding agriculture in the town. The participation level was high and individuals were extremely enthusiastic and had a lot of good ideas.

The Seward public meeting was held on March 23rd at 7:00 PM at Seward Town Hall. Fourteen individuals from the community attended as well as committee members and facilitators. Town Supervisor Larry Phillips gave an introduction and committee member Rick Bates, a dairy farmer, explained the process of developing an agriculture and farmland protection plan. Laura led the group in a SWOT analysis. There was good participation from the group and many concerns were expressed regarding the viability of agriculture in the town.

Both meetings were advertised in the local newspapers including the *Times Journal* and *My Shopper*. Refreshments were served at the meetings and maps were on display for the public to examine. Many stayed well after the meetings came to an official close to share refreshments, talk about farming in the towns and study the maps. All comments made during the SWOT analysis in both towns were recorded and summarized for the committee.

Mapping

The Town of Seward agriculture and farmland protection plan committee met in April to review the maps and work on improving the accuracy of the map's depiction of active agricultural land. As of the last joint executive committee meeting the Town of Carlisle had not yet met to review the maps but will do so in the near future. The towns need to identify the active agricultural land acreage so that they can begin working with David Cox of the Cornell Cooperative Extension to study of the economic impact of agriculture.

The committee reviewed the agriculture inventory map from the Town of Charlton's draft agriculture and farmland protection plan. The committee liked the idea of breaking out specific types of agriculture but agreed to focus on identifying active agricultural land as a whole first. Laura also distributed addresses for internet links to Charlton's draft plan as well as the Town of Parma's completed agriculture and farmland protection plan.

Inventories Reaching Completion

The Town of Seward's committee has finalized its inventory of agriculture in the town. The Town of Carlisle committee is finalizing its inventory using maps provided by Schoharie County.

Regulation Review

Laura has forwarded Carlisle's town clerk a list of local ordinances she is requesting copies of. Linda Cross, who is also on the town's planning board, has offered a list of her suggestions. Laura will also request anything on Linda's list that has not already been requested. A copy of all of Seward's miscellaneous local ordinances has been given to Laura. Laura plans to begin the regulation review once the interview summary is complete.

Schoharie County Soil and Water Conservation District

Zachary Thompson, planning assistant with the Schoharie County Planning Department, has arranged for a representative from the district to come to the committee's May meeting to discuss soils. Laura distributed a description of the information John Brennan, of NYSDAM, would like the discussion to cover. Zach will forward this to the soil and water conservation district office. Discussion will cover soil types, the history and science behind the soil survey, the consideration of soils during land use planning and programs available to assist farmers.

Website

The joint executive committee's minutes and progress reports are now up on each town's page on the Schoharie County website. Laura is working on an introduction with information about the agriculture and farmland protection plans that will be posted as well.

Goals

The committee has devoted a significant portion of their March and April meetings to the discussion of goals and recommendations to be made in the plan. They are reviewing goals drafted by other towns including Wright, Bethlehem, Brutus and Eden. Committee members have focused on the issue of economic viability of farming in the towns and how to support both existing and new farmers. Laura will prepare a summary of ideas on the table to date for committee members to review at their May meeting.

Next Meeting: Monday, May 18th, 2009, 7 PM, Schoharie County Planning Department *(this meeting has been changed from the fourth Monday of the month to the third Monday of the month to accommodate a scheduling conflict of Laura's.)*