

**TOWN OF FARMINGTON AGRICULTURAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE
MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF JANUARY 16, 2014**

MINUTES DRAFT #2

The following minutes are written as a summary of the main points that were made and the actions taken at the Town of Farmington Agricultural Advisory Committee meeting.

Committee Members Present:

Peter Maslyn, *Chairperson*
Henry Adams
Don Jones
Royal Purdy

Staff Present:

Ronald L. Brand, Town of Farmington Director of Planning and Development

Also Present:

Robert Bowe
Dick Padgham
Rick Padgham

1. MEETING OPENING

Mr. Maslyn called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

2. UPDATE OF FARMLAND PROTECTION PLAN

Mr. Brand reported on the first meeting of the Farmland Protection Plan Advisory Committee that was held on October 30, 2013, and presented the following update on the committee's work that is now in progress. He also discussed the data and related information that this group would like to receive from the Agricultural Advisory Committee.

Topics Now Being Addressed by the Farmland Protection Plan Advisory Committee:

A. Farmland and Agricultural Resource Inventory

Mr. Brand presented several maps of agricultural lands in the Town of Farmington and in particular discussed the map that delineates land in agricultural use that is either owned or rented by farmers.

He said that the next step is the preparation of a soils map and that, as part of this process, the Town Assessor is using agriculture exemption data to prepare a list-

ing of each parcel in the Town on which an agriculture exemption has been granted. This map would include a listing of the class of soils from 1 to 9 and their acreages. This data would then be compared to existing maps from the Ontario County Soil and Water Conservation District to determine distinctions and differences and to identify the locations of the more prime and productive soils in the Town.

B. Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats

Mr. Brand explained that a Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) analysis was made at the first meeting of the Farmland Protection Plan Advisory Committee and that these are now being analyzed by Robert King of Georgic Environmental, the committee's consultant. Dr. King will report at the next meeting on how these are expected to impact agricultural operations in the Town.

Strengths

Soils

Deep historical family ties to the land

Younger generations taking ownership of the land

Families doing more estate planning

Good access to markets via road transportation to Rochester and Syracuse

Availability of rail service (Farmington pursuing spur line at Town facility, as well)

Good roads (New York State Thruway and other highways friendly to farm operations)

Community generally supportive of agriculture

Stable agricultural community, strong tradition, solid base

Agricultural production increasing, prices are up

New outlets for sales

Stable municipal property taxes (but no control over school property taxes)

Agricultural diversity, i.e., market crops, equine, etc.

Good supply of fresh water

Good support: vendors, dealers, private crop consultants, Cornell Cooperative Extension

Energy-saving rebates; energy conservation opportunities

Development generally contained in one portion of the Town, not mixed with farming

Development provides potential markets; development not all bad

Good roads; best roads in the county

Weaknesses

School property taxes

Impact of several school districts within the Town on property taxes

Rising prices of agricultural land

Drainage (mixed strength and weakness): some areas do not have good drainage, some do
Lack of inter-municipal cooperation on topics such as drainage or land-use regulations
Resale of energy into the grid: no incentive to pursue alternative energy sources
Traffic issues from new development
Succession planning: family may sell land rather than keep it for the next generation
Leased land vs. owned land: leasing removes future assurance that land will be available
Instability: fewer people engaged in farming; people more distant in agriculture
Benign neglect by the public of agriculture and how farm products get to market
Genetic drift: buffer plots needed

Opportunities

Agriculture benefits more than ever from exports
Fertile soils
Fresh water supply
Public awareness of local food production (for example, Town web site)
Promotion of organic foods
Niche farming/agri-tourism/buy at local farm markets and stands

Threats

Labor policies and changing regulations affecting agricultural operations
Food modernization acts (prescribed manufacturing practices)
Lack of farm representation on local governments
Environmental regulations (EPA)
Federal and state labor regulations (overtime, immigration issues)
Volatile commodity and energy prices; risk management
Animal welfare regulations, public perception (animals confined vs. free roam)
Lack of cost sharing by government with farmers to pay for the costs of regulations
OSHA coming to farms
Traffic intensification/change in truck traffic routes/trucks using Town roads more often
No control over development and policy decisions in neighboring towns

C. Identification of Significant and Irreplaceable Soils

Mr. Brand asked the committee members for direction regarding the identification of significant and irreplaceable soils, and if this portion of the project should be

focused only on the Class 1 and Class 2 soils, or if the identification should be expanded. Mr. Maslyn said that the identification of the prime and most productive farmland should be included in the identification process.

D. Inventory of Current Agricultural Operations

Mr. Brand asked the Agricultural Advisory Committee members to accept the assignment of producing an inventory of current agricultural uses in the Town. He said that the committee could begin this task by referring to the owned-vs.-rented land and Open Space Index maps. He said that the identification of the various categories of land use is intended to show the diversity of farming operations in the Town. The following categories of uses were listed:

- A. Dairy, Livestock and Horses
- B. Field Crops
- C. Truck Vegetables
- D. Fruit Crops
- E. Nurseries and Greenhouses
- F. Other Agricultural Uses

He asked the committee to complete this work by the end of February 2014.

Mr. Jones noted that some crops are not always planted on the same fields every year. He and Mr. Adams said that the categories might need to be flexible due to year-to-year changes. Mr. Brand said that this is the type of information that the Farmland Protection Plan Advisory Committee needs to know as the work continues.

E. Drainage and Water Quality Concerns

Mr. Brand asked the committee members to provide comments regarding the creation of a town-wide drainage district. He said that the Farmland Protection Plan Advisory Committee is working on the identification of drainage and water quality concerns and issues that may impact and influence agricultural practices. He also noted that the Farmland Protection Plan is not a drainage study, but the Plan can highlight concerns about drainage impacts and may suggest an in-depth follow-up by the Soil and Water Conservation District, the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation, or a similar organization.

He said that the Town Board would like to know if there is interest in creating a drainage district and where the drainage problem areas are located. Among the topics to be considered are engineering reports, prioritization of drainage problems, costs, and existing drainage problems that are detrimental to agriculture. He said that current Town maps do not indicate where drainage issues exist and that guidance from the Agricultural Advisory Committee is needed.

Mr. Maslyn asked about the scope of the drainage study. Mr. Brand said that the Town needs an understanding of the degree of the problem and how drainage in neighboring towns may be affecting agricultural operations in Farmington. He said that the identification of the issues and the extent of the drainage problems will help the Town Board determine if there is interest in revisiting the concept of a town-wide drainage district, and that often one town would need to begin the process before other towns decide to become involved in drainage studies in their municipalities.

Mr. Adams asked about the difference between drainage problems and wetlands protection. Mr. Brand said that wetlands are regulated and delineated by the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC). The Town has no role in delineating the mapped wetland areas. If a landowner desires to drain a mapped wetland, then he or she must apply to the DEC for a permit. The Town has no role in that application. If, however, there is a town-wide drainage district, then the Town could be involved in a permitted activity provided the landowner would be willing to grant an easement for the drainage being proposed. Mr. Bove said that the DEC did some work some years ago on his land to clear a drainage ditch but that it is now starting to clog again because the state has not maintained it. Mr. Brand said that this is the type of issue that the Farmland Protection Plan Advisory Committee needs to know. He said that we need to know where the drainage problems are, what is causing those problems, and whether or not there is interest in working with the Town to find a solution to make corrections. Mr. Brand said that the Farmland Protection Plan could become the vehicle to initiate this effort.

F. Review of Existing Town Codes

Mr. Brand reported on the committee's review of the existing Town Code and identified portions of the Code that need revision. He discussed several examples and noted that the Code was written with the best of intentions but that it often requires updating. He discussed some of the inconsistencies between the Right to Farm Law and the Town Zoning Code, for example.

Mr. Adams asked how the revisions and corrections would be made? Mr. Brand said that recommended revisions would be included in the Farmland Protection Plan. That Plan would be presented to the public for input and then to the Town Board for adoption. All of the changes would have to be made by local laws enacted by the Town Board.

G. Public Information and Outreach

Mr. Brand suggested that the Agricultural Advisory Committee expand their public outreach of its meetings. He asked that notices of their meetings be posted on the Town's web site and that there be a news release to the Town's official

newspaper, the *Canandaigua Daily Messenger*. He asked that the committee assure that minutes of its meetings are filed with the Town Clerk and then posted on the Town web site on a regular basis. Mr. Maslyn noted that the Farmington Agricultural Advisory Committee is often more active than similar committees in other towns in the county.

3. BOARD DISCUSSION

Transfer of Development Rights: Mr. Brand reported that the governor announced during his State of the State Address that the New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets will receive \$500,000 for distribution to municipalities for their use in either creating a Transfer of Development Rights program or creating new zoning regulations to implement actions contained in adopted Farmland Protection Plans. He said that Farmington should continue to proceed with its Farmland Protection Plan and that the work of active committees such as the Agricultural Advisory Committee will help justify the need for these funds to implement the Plan's recommended actions.

He said that the issues related to the Farmland Protection Plan are different from a traditional Comprehensive Plan as they directly relate to farmlands and agricultural operations, and that the Town needs the Agricultural Advisory Committee's specific information on issues related to farming.

Zoning: Mr. Padgham discussed the no-livestock zoning area on Allen Padgham Road that became effective in 1993. He and his son indicated that they would be interested in expanding their agricultural operations but are hesitant to do so without knowing if they can under existing zoning. Mr. Brand said this, and another section of the Code that regulates the setback of agricultural buildings from a lot line, are the types of topics that the committee should be discussing. He also said that he would meet with the Town Code Enforcement Office and provide Mr. Padgham a reply regarding the ability to have animals on his property.

Farmland and Agricultural Resource Inventory: Mr. Maslyn asked about the schedule of the next meeting of the Farmland Protection Plan Advisory Committee. Mr. Brand said that it should be in late February or March, depending on the timing of the completion of the maps by Lu Engineering and the SWOT analysis by Dr. King. He also said that he would like to have the agricultural operations map complete and ready for presentation. Mr. Brand then distributed copies of the parcel base map that Lu Engineers had prepared and asked the Committee members to identify the categories of agricultural operations occurring.

Regarding the categories of agricultural operations, Mr. Adams and Mr. Jones said that it would be easy to identify the agricultural uses of land in a given year, but that it would be difficult to maintain the same classifications from year to year due to crop rotations. Mr. Brand said that a note to this effect could be placed in the Farmland Protection Plan to indicate this practice. He stressed that the importance of this map is to provide a snapshot

of the diversity of operations and where they are occurring on a town-wide basis.

Committee Membership: Mr. Maslyn noted that several vacancies exist on the Agricultural Advisory Committee and asked those in the audience if they would like to serve on the committee, or if they knew of others who might be interested. Mr. Padgham said that he previously served on the committee and found that the Town often did not accept the recommendations of the group. Mr. Maslyn said that he believes that the Town Board is now more responsive to the committee's opinions and that he is asked for a report each time he attends a Town Board meeting.

On the topic of a town-wide drainage district, Mr. Maslyn asked for suggestions about inviting large landowners with and operators of horse farms to a future committee meeting at which this topic will be discussed. A number of names to be invited were suggested.

4. ADJOURNMENT

A motion was made Mr. Jones, seconded by Mr. Adams, that the meeting be adjourned.

Motion carried unanimously by voice vote. The meeting was adjourned at 8:35 p.m.

The next meeting of the Agricultural Advisory Committee will be on Thursday, February 20, 2014, at 7:00 p.m.

Following the meeting, Mr. Robortella secured the building.

Respectfully submitted,

John M. Robortella L.S.