

Town of Farmington

1000 County Road 8
Farmington, New York 14425

AGRICULTURE ADVISORY COMMITTEE
Thursday, June 23, 2016, 7:00 p.m.

MINUTES—FILED WITH TOWN CLERK

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

Committee Members Present: Henry Adams, *Chairperson*
Donald Jones
John Marvin
Peter Maslyn
Royal Purdy

Committee Members Absent: Robert Gerlock
James Gray
Doug Payne

Vacant Position: One vacant committee position

Town Officials/Staff Present:
David Degear, Town of Farmington Water and Sewer Superintendent
Ronald Herendeen, Town Board Member

1. MEETING OPENING, PUBLIC NOTICE AND NEWS MEDIA NOTIFICATION

Mr. Adams called the meeting to order at 7:30 p.m.

The clerk notified the Canandaigua *Daily Messenger* newspaper of this meeting on May 31, 2016. Notice of the meeting was posted on the Town website, filed with the Town Clerk and posted on the Town Clerk’s bulletin board at the Town Hall, and communicated via e-mail to committee members, Town staff and interested residents on June 1, 2016.

2. FARMLAND PROTECTION PLAN—LANSING, N.Y., AUGUST 2015

Mr. Adams requested that board members review and comment upon the Farmland Protection Plan from Lansing, N.Y., as distributed to members of the Farmington Farmland Protection Plan Advisory Committee in April 2016. He noted that the Town of Lansing appears to be dealing with the protection of farmland and the pressures of new development similar to the issues now facing the Town of Farmington.

3. RECEIPT OF MATERIALS FROM DIRECTOR OF DEVELOPMENT AND PLANNING

The board acknowledged receipt and reviewed the following materials submitted by Ronald L. Brand, Town of Farmington Director of Development and Planning, as follows:

1. Responses from John Brennan, New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets (NYSDAM), to the minutes of the Farmland Protection Plan Advisory Committee meeting of May 31, 2016. Per Mr. Brand's e-mail to Mr. Brennan, dated June 21, 2016, these comments will become an addendum to the minutes and will be filed with the Town Clerk and posted on the Town website.
2. Map: Ontario County Agricultural District #1, recertified for the period 2012–2020
3. Map: Ontario County Agricultural District #1
4. Map: Ontario County Agricultural Districts #1, #6, #8 and #9. Per Mr. Brand's e-mail to Mr. Brennan, dated June 21, 2016, this map will be added to the Appendices of the Farmland Protection Plan.
5. Local Laws and Agricultural Districts: How Do They Relate?
6. Guidelines for Review of Local Laws Affecting Preparation and Marketing Activities by Start-up Farm Operations

4. DISCUSSION OF REMARKS FROM JOHN BRENNAN, NYSDAM

Board members reviewed the summary of responses from John Brennan, NYSDAM, to the minutes of the Farmland Protection Plan Advisory Committee meeting of May 31, 2016, and asked for clarification from Town staff on the following two items:

Page 3: “Mr. King said that the state officials in the Department of Agriculture and Markets have identified lands west of County Road 8 as the highest priority for farmland protection. . . .”

Response from Mr. Brennan:

Do you have this right? It is the lands east of County Road 8, “strong blocks of Ag lands exist in the eastern sector of the Town,” from my April 27th memo.

Page 4: “Mr. King noted that the state officials would like the Town to identify the farmland to be considered for protection, prioritize the parcels and select the measures to be used to protect these lands. . . .”

Response from Mr. Brennan:

This, of course, should be part of THIS plan. This is a key element of any Ag plan funded by NYSDAM. We do not need to see prioritized parcels but certainly the location of farmland to be protected needs to be part of this plan. So I’m unsure under this heading “Next Steps.” Hopefully, this does not mean after this plan has been approved by the Town Board. If it does, we need to talk.

During a general discussion of farmland protection, Mr. Adams noted that the focus should be upon the preservation of farmland and not necessarily upon the farm business. He said that the emphasis should be on the land.

Mr. Marvin suggested that a meeting of local farmers and landowners be held with a representative from New York State to explain the details of the programs and options now available for farmland protection. He noted that having the details of the current programs would be beneficial prior to the prioritization of the farmland in the Town.

Mr. Adams said that the Town could better assess landowners’ interest in farmland protection programs after having reviewed the available options and determining the steps of their implementation.

Mr. Jones said that it is important for landowners to determine their future plans—whether to keep their land in agriculture and seek farmland preservation or to sell their land for investment.

5. REVIEW OF REVISED DRAFT OF THE FARMLAND PROTECTION PLAN

Mr. Adams reviewed the following portions of the revised draft of the Farmland Protection Plan and asked that they be rewritten for clarity:

Chapter 8: Build-out Analysis

Page 39, “Coping with Growth,” first paragraph, last sentence:

“Thus, the impact of this continued growth upon the community’s land based agricultural sector is intended to sustain the established agricultural and rural residential areas during this period.”

Page 39, “Coping with Growth,” second paragraph, last sentence:

“Therefore, specific goals and objectives focus upon stimulating the Town’s land based agricultural resources with programs and regulations that also promote the Town’s social and economic qualities.”

Page 43, “Discussion,” second line:

“The loss of farmland results in homes located upon large tracts [of] land no longer available for farming.”

Page 43A, “Conclusion and Implication,” last sentence:

“Otherwise the resultant pattern of sprawl will continue the greater loss of farmland and the higher costs of taxes to maintain the levels of services for non-farm development.”

Mr. Adams said that the intent of this text presents a compelling argument to preserve farmland and should be included in the plan, i.e., that there is less cost to the Town to service farmland than there is to service developed land.

6. “GAIN” PROGRAM

Mr. Adams discussed New York State’s “Growing the Agriculture Industry Now” (GAIN) program that was announced by Governor Andrew M. Cuomo on May 13, 2016. This is a \$3 million revolving loan program to provide loans to new businesses that do not meet traditional financing organizations’ underwriting standards. The first advance of \$1.2 million has been released to the Genesee/Finger Lakes Regional Planning Council, which—in coordination with local development corporations—represents the nine-county regions managing the loan program.

Mr. Adams expressed concern about the details of how funds would be loaned to new businesses that ordinarily would not qualify for loans from traditional lenders. He questioned how the State would handle losses that could occur when new businesses do not succeed and cannot repay the funds.

For more details on this program:

<https://www.governor.ny.gov/news/governor-cuomo-announces-new-revolving-loan-program-assist-finger-lakes-agricultural-industry>

7. ADDITIONAL MEMBERS ON THE AGRICULTURAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Mr. Adams noted that he is inclined to wait until the Town Board has accepted the Farmland Protection Plan before seeking prospective additional members to the Agricultural Advisory Committee. He noted that additional membership on the committee is a stated objective in the Plan which has not yet been adopted by the Town Board. He also explained that although the committee may wish to suggest names of prospective new members, their appointments are made by the Town Board. Mr. Maslyn suggested that the committee be proactive in seeking prospective new members.

8. FARMLAND PROTECTION PLAN TIMELINE

Board members reviewed the timeline for adoption of the Farmland Protection Plan and implementation of the subsequent steps as currently listed in the Plan. Board members asked if the timeline should be revised prior to presentation of the Plan to the Town Board?

9. NEXT MEETING AND ADJOURNMENT

Due to the several items for which the board members have asked for clarification, it was the consensus of the board that the next meeting be scheduled following receipt of the requested clarifications.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:10 p.m.

Following the meeting, the clerk secured the building.

Respectfully submitted,

John M. Robortella L.S.
Clerk of the Agricultural Advisory Committee

CLARIFICATION FROM DIRECTOR OF DEVELOPMENT AND PLANNING

The following clarification to the discussion at the meeting was submitted by Ronald L. Brand, Town of Farmington Director of Development and Planning:

Having reviewed the draft meeting minutes of last night’s Agriculture Advisory Committee and based upon a conversation this morning with Bob King, the following may help clarify a point of discussion.

When Bob King and I had a conference call with John Brennan and Scott Richmond from the New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets, we discussed the build-out analysis and where in the Town had the highest conversion pressure.

It is our understanding (at least Bob’s and mine) that land west of County Road 8 appears to be under the highest pressure for conversion from agricultural use to non-agricultural use. This is primarily due—but not limited to—the presence of, and proximity to, public water and sewer.

The largest concentration of active farmland in the Town is indeed located east of County Road 8. Our interpretation is that Ag and Markets does not want the Town to lose track of the importance of protecting large concentrated areas of active farmlands east of County Road 8. However, based upon conversion pressure and rating criteria that is commonly used to prioritize lands for implementing a Purchase of Development Rights program or a Transfer of Development Rights program, with all else being equal, the lands west of County Road 8 would initially be given a higher priority for farmland protection than lands east of County Road 8. Development pressure in this area is evidenced by the Plan’s findings and by statements made by John Marvin at the last Agriculture and Farmland Protection Plan Advisory Committee meeting.

The changes to the implementation action dates in Chapter 10 will be made prior to submission to the Town Board on July 12, 2016. Copies will be provided to those having the draft Plan document. Intentions are to have the public hearing on July 26, 2016, with adoption to follow soon thereafter.

—Ronald L. Brand, Director of Development and Planning
June 24, 2016