

# *Town of Farmington*

1000 County Road 8  
Farmington, New York 14425

## **AGRICULTURAL AND FARMLAND ADVISORY COMMITTEE (AFAC) PUBLIC INFORMATION MEETING**

**Thursday, April 28, 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 Agricultural and Farmland Advisory Committee meeting.*

***Town of Farmington Farmland Protection Plan Advisory Committee Authorization:***  
Farmington Town Board Resolution #138-2013, March 26, 2013

#### **Committee Members Present:**

Ronald L. Brand, <i>Chair</i>	Farmington Director of Planning and Development
Henry Adams	Farmington Agricultural Advisory Committee Chair
Dr. Michael Casale	Farmington Town Board Representative
Ronald Herendeen	Farmington Town Board Representative <i>(Former Town of Farmington Planning Board Representative)</i>
Susan Hilton, P.E.	Farmington Conservation Board Representative
Peter Maslyn	Farmington Agricultural Advisory Committee Representative
Royal Purdy	Farmington Agricultural Advisory Committee Representative

#### **Committee Member Excused:**

James Ochterski	Consultant, Field Stone Communications LLC/ Past Cornell Cooperative Extension Agency Representative
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#### **Also Present:**

Marie Anselm, Agriculture Economic Development Specialist, Cornell University  
Cooperative Extension, Ontario County, 480 North Main Street,  
Canandaigua, N.Y. 14424

Robert G. Bowe, 195 Hook Road, Farmington, N.Y. 14425

Ronald R. Cramer, 5132 Fox Road, Palmyra, N.Y. 14522

David Degear, Farmington Water and Sewer Superintendent

Denise Dillman, 5854 Allen Padgham Road, Farmington, N.Y. 14425

Lou Gerlock, 5009 Shortsville Road, Shortsville, N.Y. 14548

Robert Gerlock, Farmington Agricultural Advisory Committee Member

Steven Holtz, Farmington Town Board Member

Gary R. Hooper, 7281 Gauss Road, Bloomfield, N.Y. 14469

Peter Ingalsbe, Supervisor, Town of Farmington  
Denis Lepel, 1089 County Road 28, Shortsville, N.Y. 14548  
John Marvin, Farmington Agricultural Advisory Committee Member  
Tim Mickelsen, 1544 Meadowbrook Lane, Farmington, N.Y. 14425  
Pat and Barb Murphy, 4995 Rushmore Road, Palmyra, N.Y. 14522  
Muriel A. Nado, 261 E. Main Street, Victor, N.Y. 14564  
Richard Padgham, 5854 Allen Padgham Road, Farmington, N.Y.  
Patricia Power, 4832 Rushmore Road, Palmyra, N.Y. 14522  
John Reese, 643 County Road 8, Farmington, N.Y. 14425  
Melinda M. Rodas, 625 County Road 28, Palmyra, N.Y. 14522  
Michael Saviola, Environmental Analyst, New York State Department of Agriculture and  
Markets, 1530 Jefferson Road, Rochester, N.Y. 14623  
William J. Tosch, 35 Emerald Hill Circle, Fairport, N.Y. 14450  
Douglas and [?] Weigert, 751 Crowley Road, Farmington, N.Y. 14425  
Penny Woods, 1136 Stafford Road, Shortsville, N.Y. 14548

### **1. MEETING OPENING, PUBLIC NOTICE AND NEWS MEDIA NOTIFICATION**

Mr. Adams called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m.

The Canandaigua *Daily Messenger* newspaper was notified of this meeting on April 5, 2016. Notice of the meeting was posted on the Town website, filed with the Town Clerk and communicated via e-mail to committee members, Town staff and interested residents on the same date. The *Daily Messenger* published a front-page article about this meeting on April 26, 2016.

### **2. WELCOME**

Mr. Adams welcomed everyone in attendance and opened the meeting with a reading of the introduction from the *Town of Farmington Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan* (the Plan) which states that “the Plan provides a course of action to mitigate threats to productive agriculture soils and to promote viable farming operations within the Town.”

### **3. INTRODUCTIONS AND BACKGROUND**

Mr. Brand introduced members of the Agricultural and Farmland Advisory Committee (AFAC) and the Town’s Agricultural Advisory Committee (AAC) and their respective affiliations. He also introduced Town Supervisor Ingalsbe and Deputy Town Supervisor Holtz who were in attendance. He then explained that the AFAC was charged by the Farmington Town Board in 2013 to prepare a Farmland Protection Plan with assistance from Cornell Cooperative Extension. Funding was provided by a grant from the New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets (Ag and Markets) with matching

funds from the Town. He noted that Jim Ochterski from Cornell Cooperative Extension had approached Town of Canandaigua Supervisor Fralik to consider a joint application with Farmington in the creation of the Plan to address common agricultural issues, but Canandaigua did not join at the time. He noted that Canandaigua has just started work on its own Farmland Protection Plan within the past two months.

Mr. Brand said the Plan's emphasis is to focus town implementation actions on protection of the more productive agricultural soils and promote viable farming operations that are located within various portions of the Town. He explained that the AFAC reviewed locations within Farmington to define the areas to be protected, which is a requirement of Ag and Markets. He said that the AFAC then continued the study with an identification of the soils and a review of existing land-use regulations and how they affect the agricultural soils resource base and the established farming operations, also a requirement of Ag and Markets for inclusion in the Plan.

Mr. Brand said that the State places a great deal of emphasis upon public awareness and participation in the Farmland Protection Plan development and the AFAC's work. He encouraged those in attendance to read the Plan and provide comments. He noted that the Plan has been available on the Town website since mid-February and that hard copies are available for the public in the Town Clerk's office and the Development Office. He said that the final plan will include changes received from the AFAC members, the Ontario County Agricultural Enhancement Board, the New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets and the public. All of this input will be presented to the Town Board for consideration and adoption later this year as an amendment to the Town's Comprehensive Plan.

Mr. Brand said that the Ontario County Agricultural Enhancement Board has reviewed the Plan. He reported that the general overall comment is that the board was pleased that the Town of Farmington was taking the lead to identify the importance of the Town's agriculture soils resources and the established farming operations within the community. He said that a number of the Board's comments will be incorporated into the revised draft of the Plan.

He also reported that Ag and Markets has recently completed its review and seeks an array of land-use controls and policy statements that call for eliminating sprawl in the eastern portion of the Town. He also noted the emphasis of Ag and Markets on Chapter 10 of the Plan regarding amendments to various sections of Town Code Chapter 165 and the State's suggestion that purchase of development rights, transfer of development rights and easements be considered among the strategies to protect farmland. Mr. Brand and Mr. King (the Plan's consultant) will further discuss the Ag and Markets' comments with the State representative. He said many of the State's comments already have been included in the report and may be further emphasized at greater detail at the State's recommendation.

Mr. Brand also noted that the Plan's comments on seeking strategies to help farmers

become more profitable, on expansion of farm markets and on agri-tourism campaigns, which are included in the Plan, may be expanded at the State's recommendation.

Mr. Brand said that the Town Board is expected to hold a Public Hearing on the Plan later this spring. He encouraged those in attendance to read the report, to read and/or download it from the website and to take copies of Chapter 2 (the Executive Summary) available at the door this evening. He also urged everyone in attendance to take a copy of the comment sheet, fill it in, and reply. He stressed the importance of everyone's thoughts.

#### **4. DATA COLLECTION AND MAPPING**

Ms. Hilton presented an overview of the agricultural data that was collected and mapped. Large-size copies of the maps that are printed in the Plan document were displayed, as follows:

- Map No. 1—Owned versus Rented Active Farmland
- Map No. 2—Soil Types (Images 1–4)
- Map No. 3—Farmland Production
- Map No. 4—Soils Classifications vs. Zoning Classes
- Map No. 5—Existing Zoning
- Map No. 6—Multiple Soil Types
- Map No. 7—Farmland Conversion Map
- Map No. 8—Farmland Protection Areas Map

#### **5. STRENGTHS, WEAKNESSES, OPPORTUNITIES, THREATS (SWOT) ANALYSIS**

Mr. Maslyn presented a summary of the SWOT Analysis that was completed as one of the first tasks of the AFAC, i.e.:

##### **Strengths (Internal)**

- Productive soils
- Agricultural heriage, 3 to 8 generations
- Increase in younger generation ownership
- Increase in estate planning by families
- Close proximity to urban markets (Rochester, Syracuse, Buffalo)
- Rail service availability
- Good transportation network and roads
- Strong community support of agriculture
- Stable and strong agricultural base
- Increased agricultural productivity and profitability
- New markets for farm products
- Stable municipal property tax
- Diversity of agricultural operations

- Abundant quantity and quality of water
- Strong agribusiness and supplier network
- Energy conservation programs and rebates
- Confined development within the Town
- Development provides marketing opportunities

**Opportunities (External)**

- Relationship with Finger Lakes Community College
- Great Lakes Kraut operations longevity
- Increase in commodity exports
- Abundant fertile soils within the Town
- Fresh water supply
- Public awareness of local food production
- Local food movement
- Growth in organic operations
- Setting and proximity to population centers
- Niche farming/agri-tourism/ “buy local”

**Weaknesses (Internal)**

- Diversity in public school taxing jurisdictions
- School property taxes
- Increased land values impacting farmland assessments
- Rising prices of agricultural land
- Drainage in some areas
- Lack of inter-municipal cooperation on drainage and land use
- No incentive for sale of alternative energy
- Increasing traffic from new development
- Leased land vs. owned; unsure about future land availability
- Succession planning; families include to sell rather than transfer
- Shrinking generations of farmers
- Next generation more distant from agriculture
- Genetic drift potential; buffer plots required
- Community neglect and lack of knowledge of agriculture
- Improve field access to minimize road debris
- Guard rail placement and setbacks on local roads

**Threats (External)**

- Federal and State labor policy and programs
- Federal immigration policies impacting labor
- State labor laws regarding overtime
- Food Modernization Act
- Lack of farm representation on local government
- Environmental regulations (EPA, DEC)
- Volatile energy and commodity prices
- Public perception of animal welfare
- Lack of cost sharing by government to meet environmental regulations

OSHA regulations  
 Increase in traffic and trucks on local roads  
 Nuisance suits involving noise, dust and odors  
 Public concern over agricultural practices and expansion plans  
 Lack of improved field access onto roads

Mr. Maslyn explained that several of the points in the analysis may be amended as agricultural operations change from year to year, such as the recent change in the operation of Great Lakes Kraut, a purchaser of locally-grown cabbage and other crops.

## 6. SURVEY RESULTS OVERVIEW

Mr. Adams provided a summary of the Farm Operator Survey and the Leased Farmland Survey that were conducted during the preparation of the Plan.

Among the major points of these surveys:

### *Farm Operator Survey:*

<b>Age:</b>	50% of respondents are over 60 years of age 25% of respondents are 50–59 years of age 17% of respondents are 40–49 years of age 8% of respondents are 29 years of age or less
<b>Characteristics of Operations:</b>	62% farm operations to remain the same 29% farm operations to increase in size 8% farm operations to reduce in size
<b>Changes in the Past 5 Years:</b>	71% of operators made no changes 29% of operators made changes
<b>Farm Income:</b>	37.5% gross farm income more than \$100,000 33.0% gross farm income \$25,000 to \$100,000 29.5% gross farm income less than \$20,000
<b>Continue to Farm:</b>	28% expect to farm for 10 years or more 72% expect to farm for 10 years or less

**Suggestions to strengthen farming:** reduce property taxes, advocate on behalf of farmers, promote agricultural economic development, promote sustainable and locally grown agricultural products, change farmland assessment practices, and support and promote programs for young and beginning farmers.

***Leased Farmland Survey:***

<b>Characteristics of Ownership:</b>	55% family or sentimental reasons 23% current income or investment 22% Other (hunting, privacy, tax purposes, open space, personal uses)
<b>Future of Ownership:</b>	61% highly important to keep land in ag. use 25% semi important to keep land in ag. use 14% other comments
<b>Loss of Farmland:</b>	83% loss of farmland a problem for the Town 14% loss of farmland not a problem for the Town

**7. CHAPTERS 7, 8 AND 9 OVERVIEW**

In response to a general question of why farmland protection is important, Mr. Brand explained that Ag and Markets seeks to increase the awareness of the needs of the farming community to local elected officials and residents. Previously, he said, there was not a mechanism to advocate for farmers. He said that the thrust of the farmland protection plan program is to enable local communities to develop the strategies necessary to protect the land base which is essential for viable farming.

He said that Ag and Markets seeks an examination of the diversity of agricultural operations within a community and that the Farmington plan specifically presents the diversity of agricultural within the Town.

Mr. Brand then reviewed the results of the data collection regarding the identification of Prime Soils and soils classifications within Farmington. He noted that this was a priority of Ag and Markets and that these classifications have been well defined in the Plan. He reviewed the locations of Prime Soils and explained that the Plan identifies soils that would become Prime Soils if they were to be properly drained.

He reviewed the constraints impacting farm viability that have been identified in the Plan. These include Town Code regulations that are outdated and not reflective of the need for sustaining farming operations or protecting soil resources, lack of drainage improvements to be implemented that are based upon a larger area than individual properties, heightened awareness of the diversity and needs of agricultural operations, federal and state labor policies and programs, the Food Modernization Act, lack of farm representation on local boards, Environmental Protection Agency regulations changes, state labor rules changes that have been made over time, federal immigration policies affecting farm labor, volatile energy costs, volatile commodity prices, the Animal Welfare Act, lack of cost sharing, OSHA regulations, traffic routes changing from state highways to local roads, nuisance suits, and lack of field access onto public highways.

Mr. Brand explained that the Plan is not regulation and is not a law but that it provides an opportunity to begin a focused effort on how to move forward to achieve meaningful solutions for the farming community to help their operations and sustain their viable soil resources.

Mr. Brand discussed Chapter 8 (“Build-out Analysis”) which discusses the foundation of past development decisions, understanding current development trends, and coping with growth. He explained that there are 11,606 acres of active farmlands remaining in the Town and discussed the impact of future build-out within the A-80 Agricultural District (which covers about 85 percent of the land area of the active farmlands) and the RR-80 Rural Residential and RS-25 Residential–Suburban zoning districts.

He also noted that the potential build-out analysis finds that there are a total of 10,260 lots on the remaining farmlands. These lots have the capacity to accommodate an additional 28,728 persons at the 2.8 persons-per-household. Combining the existing population with the build-out of the remaining active farmlands, the potential population of the Town would be 76,278 persons. Mr. Brand noted that while this exercise would take several decades to realize, the real threat to viable farming in the Town would likely come quicker from the fragmentation of farmland—the invasion of low density residential development into established farming areas.

## **8. CHAPTER 10 OVERVIEW**

Mr. Brand reviewed Chapter 10 (“Plan Implementation Actions”) which lists a matrix of action steps which he said provides the blueprint for the Town to move forward on farmland protection. He said that the Plan must be formally adopted by the Town Board to become an official policy document due to the Plan’s proposed changes to existing legislation and abatement programs. Mr. Brand said formal Town Board action also provides a justification to the farming community and to the residents of the entire Town on the level of importance placed by the governing board on farmland protection.

Mr. Brand also noted the Plan’s recommendation of expanding the Agricultural Advisory Committee (AAC) to include not only farmers but other Town residents, such as those who live in the agricultural areas and those who are renting their lands to farmers.

He explained that future tasks to be completed include an in-depth analysis of purchase of development rights, transfer of development rights and conservation easements to study how these programs would work and how the Town would compete with other municipalities for state funding. He also noted that establishment of a ranking system is needed to prioritize the applications for these programs.

Mr. Brand concluded by explaining that the AFAC has no preconceived notions regarding farmland protection in the Town and that public input is vital to help guide the committee and the Town Board in identifying and implementing various strategies to protect

the remaining farmland. The Plan, however, identifies the actions deemed necessary to implement an effective program.

## **9. OPEN DISCUSSION**

Mr. Adams led a discussion of comments and questions from those attending the meeting. Among the comments:

- A resident asked about efforts to recruit and encourage young people to consider careers in agriculture. Mr. Adams and Mr. Maslyn noted the opportunities and activities currently available and welcomed new initiatives. Mr. Brand said this would be an excellent topic for the Ontario County Agricultural Enhancement Board to consider as a countywide effort.
- Mr. Gerlock discussed the price per acre of farmland and how the high prices can prevent new farmers from entering agriculture. He encouraged farmland protection and noted that once farmland is subdivided for other uses, it may never return to active agriculture.
- A resident spoke about increasing traffic on the roads and the issues that it creates for farmers and their equipment. Mr. Adams noted that traffic always has been a problem and that perhaps the Town could assist in alleviating some of the conflict with a public-awareness program.
- A resident encouraged early education and establishment of programs for young adults in the 18 to 25 age range to become active farmers. She indicated that she has started a foundation to provide funding to assist young people to establish farms. Mr. Brand praised this effort and asked her to provide contact information to the committee to explore this initiative further. Another resident commented that farmers may become a dying breed. Mr. Adams and Mr. Maslyn discussed various events and programs that often bring students and young adults to their farms for tours and a review of career opportunities. Mr. Adams explained that profitability is the best way to keep land in active agriculture and people attracted to farming. He explained that commercial agriculture is consolidating and that one of the best ways for young people to enter the field is to start working on an established farm and build equity toward a future partnership or purchase of the business. Dr. Casale noted that entering the agricultural field is similar to a young person entering any career.

## **10. NEXT STEPS**

Mr. Adams explained that it is the intent of the committee to learn more about development rights strategies and how these programs function for the protection of farmland.

Mr. Brand emphasized that community awareness of the Plan and the public's comments and input are encouraged. He noted that the participation of the farming community in the work of the AAC had been waning and that the committee hopes that the emphasis of the Plan would lead to a rejuvenation of the farming community to become more involved in the effort to preserve agricultural lands within the Town and promote viable farming operations.

Supervisor Ingalsbe thanked the committee for its work and the residents for attending the meeting this evening.

## **11. ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting was adjourned at 8:05 p.m.

Following the meeting, Supervisor Ingalsbe secured the building.

Respectfully submitted,

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L.S.

John M. Robortella  
Clerk of the Farmington Planning Board