

Bethel & Liberty Farmland Protection Plan Committee Meeting, September 22, 2009.

John Schmidt	Robert Blais	Peter Stettner	David Biren	Fred Michel
Harold Russell	Nan Stolzenburg	Jill Weyer	Paul Hahn	Dan Sturm
Melinda Ketcham	Jennifer Mall	Dan Shockey	Willie Hughson	Maureen Barber

Strategies

1. Foundation Actions

A, B, C, and D: are meant to give this plan ownership. The Town Board will likely be too busy to undertake the details of implementing the plan. So an intermunicipal committee can lead the implementation. This works very well in other towns, as long as the Town Board sets up guidelines, instructions, expectations, timelines, reporting procedures, etc. So, the committee does the groundwork and legwork. The Town Board still has decisionmaking authority. The Committee is sort of an ad hoc or advisory committee—it's not set up by local law.

D: could be difficult given budget constraints. But it will be very beneficial in the long-term. A paid staff member is especially crucial for economic development work, which needs aggressive efforts at finding money, working with other agencies, etc.

G: For Liberty, WAC should be added to this list. A small portion of Liberty is within the NYC watershed. So, Liberty might be eligible for some Watershed Agricultural Council grants and programs.

K: is intended to elevate agriculture in the everyday thought process of the Town and its residents. So agriculture becomes a part of our everyday work.

Question from Nan: Has either town set up a committee to implement its comprehensive plan?

Liberty- in the process of convening a committee now.

Bethel- has a committee to implement the new zoning law which includes agricultural district uses, etc.

2. Strategic Actions- Economic Development

(4): Bethel's LDC already provides the structure for supporting agriculture. The BLDC hosted a farm-to-table event and should continue in its ag efforts.

Liberty's CDC is currently working on the Red Meat Processing Facility. So again, the structure is there.

Nan: Check out Jefferson County's website www.comefarmwithus.com for more ideas on economic development.

3. Strategic Actions-Policies and Regulations

(2): Bethel's Town Code already ensures that a farmer is appointed to the Planning Board. Liberty's Code ensures that all geographic regions of the town are represented, but not a farmer specifically.

(4): One finding from our surveys was that many farmers don't know much about their town's zoning. Some summary brochure, in paper and on the town websites, would be very helpful for them.

4. Strategic Actions- Education and Communication

(1): Education of non-farmers is critically important to the preservation of farmland. This has been a consistent theme throughout our survey and public input process. Education must focus on (1) how agriculture benefits non-farmers, and (2) the realities of farms and farm operations.

Suggestion: The plan could include a strategy to provide continuing education for PB and ZBA members on agriculture. The surveys indicated that farming is often neglected in PB and ZBA decisionmaking processes.

FYI- SC Planning, CCE and the Dispute Resolution Center are hosting a session entitled "Farm Neighbor Relationships" on October 10. See attached postcard for details.

5. Strategic Actions- Farmland Preservation

(7): Perhaps we should include a sample rental agreement as an appendix to the plan.

(8): This action comes from our prioritization maps. This is critical because time and funds are limited for implementing the strategies.

6. Strategic Actions- Environmental Protection

(1) Why limit this to small wind? Let's broaden this to say "Promote renewable energy, such as wind, solar and geothermal, to take advantage of" The idea here is to create ways for farmers to reduce their costs of doing business, and maybe sell some power back to the grid, by harnessing alternative energy. Do we want to also promote industrial operations like wind farms? If so, we can re-word this action.

(2) Gas drilling: General agreement among both towns that we should remove this action from the plan. It is too general an issue to be in the farmland protection plans, and the Towns are already doing whatever they can with regard to gas drilling by working to protect roadways. This is the extent of their jurisdiction.

How to handle this section: Other agencies already address best management practices, sedimentation and erosion control, water quality, etc. Can this plan build on those? If so, how? Think about this as we continue to develop the plan. If we don't come up with anything else, let's move (1) to the economic development section and delete (2), and remove this Environmental Protection section entirely.

7. County Initiatives

Question: Can Sullivan County also work to update its list of new farms periodically?

Answer: The County doesn't have a list. That's something we would like to create or acquire, and keep updated.

8. State Initiatives

Many of the strategies listed here come from a series of forums that NYS Ag & Markets held last year, which resulted in a long list of potential state actions to protect and enhance agriculture throughout the state.

(3): Nan says there is a statewide effort to reduce the income requirements for receiving an ag assessment. This is very important, as few small farmers can qualify under the \$10,000/ \$50,000 limits.

Other announcements and items of interest:

****The Glynwood Center** in Putnam County recently developed a USDA certified mobile slaughterhouse, and received funding to do it. But, they have been unable to find a town whose zoning will allow it, and whose infrastructure can accommodate it. Check their website at www.glynwood.org

****Upcoming Event:** This Saturday, Sullivan Renaissance and the Delaware Highlands Conservancy will host speaker Ed McMahon at a seminar "Sustainable Growth and Land Conservation" at the CVI Building. Mr. McMahon will discuss planning tools to make towns attractive, efficient, profitable and environmentally sensible. Cost is \$10 and planning and zoning board members can receive training credit for attending. If you would like to attend, please contact the DHC at 845-807-0535 or 570-226-3164, or email nyland@delawarehighlands.org

****We need photos** of farms and farmers for the plan. If you have any ag photos for Liberty or Bethel, please bring them next week, or email them to Nan at nan@planningbetterplaces.com or the Planning staff at planning@co.sullivan.ny.us

Next Meeting's Agenda:

We will return to the **zoning and other regulatory land use recommendations** (see attached files).

We began discussing these at our July meeting. Next week we will decide which ones to include, remove, or modify for our plans.

We will look at the **implementation table**, which identifies responsible parties for implementing various actions, timeframes, and priority levels.

We will decide whether we want to have another **public information session**, and how and when to do it.

Next Meeting: Tuesday, September 29th at 7:30 pm at the Liberty Town Hall – note the time change! We originally planned for 8:00 but decided earlier is better.