

Callicoon/ Delaware Farmland Protection Committee Meeting, 10/16/08.

Present:

Virginia Andkjar	Jim Hughson
Linda Babicz	Melinda Ketchum (DHC)
Tom Bose	Earl Myers
Alice Diehl	Dick Riseling
John Gain	Jim Scheutzow
Stefan Gieger	Joe Walsh (CCE)
Paul Hahn (SCDPEM)	Jill Welsh
Sonja Hedlund	Pat Welsh
Joesph Horak	Jill Weyer (SCDPEM)

I. Farmer Survey

Jill:

We've narrowed down our data for survey recipients. The total is 416 farmers for the four towns. There are 236 in Callicoon and Delaware (Callicoon 110, Delaware 126), and 169 in Bethel and Liberty (Bethel 112, Liberty 57). There are 11 overlaps (people who might own in more than one town).

Nan added an introduction. We will mail the survey out in a yellow envelope, folded up, along with a postage paid return envelope.

Tess McBeath (Delaware Town Clerk) is handling the billing for Callicoon and Delaware, so can she buy half the stamps, and we'll talk to Bethel and Liberty for the other half. If the County buys the postage, we might have to bill the towns and create more paperwork. Once the surveys are all ready, we can all get together and fold and stuff envelopes.

Our hope is to get the survey out in the mail by the end of October. The Liberty and Bethel Committee meeting is October 28. They will have a couple of days to give feedback before mailing. We will give recipients two weeks to fill out and return the survey.

Q: Will we have a chance to test the survey on a farmer first?

A (Jill): We tried it on someone before splitting it into two, and the consultant has looked at it since we split it in two.

Q: Every survey done on this scale has to be tried. We might be familiar with certain language, but respondents might not understand.

A (Jill): Maybe Joe or Paul can try it out on some farmers.

A (Paul Hahn): Sure.

Jill: So e-mail or call me with any last minute changes, otherwise I'll assume that you think it looks good.

II. Agri-Service Survey

Jill:

We started out with over 300 businesses, and cut it down to 87. I'll pass around the list, so please take a look at it. It includes businesses in the four towns, and some larger regional businesses that farmers use, for example, machinery or seed dealers. I'll e-mail this one out as well. Let me know if anyone is missing from the list.

Also, some farmers were on both the agri-service list and the farmers list. For example, Brey's Egg Farm also has a compost enterprise. But they will only receive one survey.

This survey will be handled in the same way as the farmer survey, with the same two-week time frame. If some regional services don't respond, we will know who they are and we can have our intern call them directly and ask them some of the fundamental questions from the survey. Again, please give me your feedback on this survey as soon as possible.

For the purposes of the survey, an agri-service is any service business that farmers utilize to stay in business. Whether they buy equipment, feed, seed, financial services, legal services, processing, or other similar products and services. We didn't include Catskill Harvest Market, for example, because they are a specialty business. While they are not vital to your business, they help to sell your products.

Q: What about a sawmill?

Discussion of sawmills and lumber yards to add.

A (Paul Hahn): We limited those to the four towns.

Q: Are renderers included here? We should include them.

A (Jill): Yes, please write that down and we will make sure they are included.

Q: Is the first sentence—"agriculture is the #1 year-round business in Sullivan County"—true? I recently heard that health care is the #1 year-round business.

A (Jill): We will look into that. Is there another way to say it?

A: Maybe we could say it is one of the biggest businesses.

A (Jill): **We will ask the Partnership for Economic Development for an accurate statement about agriculture in the County's economy.**

3. Specialty Shops and Restaurants

Jill:

To shorten the agri-service list, we removed restaurants and specialty shops. We can handle them with a phone call, which will get us the information we want. Some buy and sell local produce, and some do not. So it's also a good opportunity to start a dialogue with them about local farm products.

4. Press Release

Jill:

We're sending around the press release to you all now. We talked about doing two press releases, but we spoke with Sue Carrier of Delaware Highlands Conservancy, who is very experienced with press releases, and she recommends that we wrap them into

one. When you put out two press releases at nearly the same time, the second one tends to be overlooked. So we can send it out when the surveys go out, to inform people that the survey is on its way.

On the back side of the press release that we're passing out to you there is a public service announcement, which is a 3 to 5 sentence overview of the process; a quick sound byte for when radio stations need to fill some air time.

Q: Could Cornell Cooperative Extension be mentioned as well, as a group providing assistance?

A (Jill): **Yes. We can add CCE in to the press release, along with the other agencies and groups.**

Q: Where is the press release going?

A (Jill): Alexis, the County's Legislative Aide, can send it out and it will be distributed widely. We will also get it to the radio stations.

Q: Could we put posters around, in post offices, banks, or on town bulletin boards? Something catchy without a lot of text.

A (Jill): That's a great idea if anyone can spearhead that. Otherwise we can do something quick at the County.

A (Melinda Ketchum): **I can take care of making posters.**

Q: Could we have someone with a voice associated with agriculture read the PSA, and ask the radio stations to put music behind it, or something to make it stand out? To get the maximum impact and response?

Discussion.

A (Joe Walsh): **I can put out a reminder in the monthly newsletter.**

5. Informational Meeting

Jill:

We want to have one meeting for everybody, to get the public's input, and a second meeting for the farmers. The public meeting will probably be about two hours long.

Q: What is the purpose of this meeting?

A (Jill): This is the public's chance to give their input on agriculture and where they think it's going.

Q: Is the meeting after the survey?

A (Jill): Yes. We will include the meeting date on the back of the survey.

Q: Will the survey results be ready by the time of the meeting?

A (Jill): We will at least have some preliminary results.

Q: How are the results going to be determined?

A (*Jill*): Nan will do it. We use SPSS, but she usually uses Excel.

Q: What is the deadline for giving you our changes to the materials?

A (*Jill*): Next Friday, a week from tomorrow. We are only going to give Liberty and Bethel a couple of days for revisions. We want to get it copied, stuffed, and mailed by November 3 (Monday) at the latest. We would prefer to get it done by the 31 of October. Then respondents have two weeks to complete and return it.

Q: Is there anything we can do if we get a low response?

A: We have a list of people who receive it, and we can call them to remind them to return it. We aren't coding the surveys, so we won't know who has returned it, but we can call everyone.

A: And I'll plan on putting out the letter reminder early in November (who is this?)

Q: Are there any farm meetings or other gatherings in November that we can use as opportunities to remind them?

A: There are some things coming up.

A (*Jill*): And you can spread the word among yourselves as well.

Jill: Ideally we will have the surveys back by the third week of November.

Q: Will we look at the results before the public meeting?

A (*Jill*): **I'll find out Nan's turnaround time.**

Q: Can we post the findings at public places for people to come and look at?

A (*Jill*): We want to keep a list of interested parties. People can get results by calling the Planning Department, and we'll put their names on the list. We want to keep track of who is interested, so that we can contact them again if there are future mailings.

Q: What is the worst that can happen? I am concerned that we might get terrible results, which is why I want farmers to look at this before we send it out.

A (*Jill*): The public informational meeting is for non-farmers. So if we don't have the full survey results in by the time of that meeting, some basic findings will be sufficient. But for the farmers' focus group, we do want to have more information from the survey. We want to actively engage the farmers in a more in-depth discussion.

We can do another press release to spread the word about the meetings. We can put it on the community calendars on the radio and in the papers.

Discussion of possible number of attendees at public meeting.

-I don't think you will have a good turnout for the public meeting, because people are apathetic.

-But people are becoming very interested in land issues—the Open Space Institute has held some sessions at CVI and around 20 people would usually attend to learn and express ideas. We might be surprised by the turnout.

-And by having the public meeting on a Saturday, we might catch some of the weekend crowd.

Dick Riseling: I can ask the program committee at WJFF to do some advertisements.

Discussion of radio shows that sometimes feature farmers and might be willing to visit farms or speak with farmers, to increase awareness of the survey.

Q: On Thunder Country, they have roundtables on Tuesday evenings. Also something on Wednesday mornings. Can I leave it up to the committee to figure out the radio angle?

A (Dick Riseling): I can coordinate the radio efforts.

Jill: We might be able to target the farmers a little bit more, and send them a postcard or call them to let them know it's very important that they come out for the meeting.

Jill: Using the grant money, we will provide food at both meetings. Jeff Inn will be the location, and Jim Hughson is the contact (482-9826). We can compensate him for the space and food. Tess will work out the billing.

Discussion of food to be offered at the meetings.

Discussion of dates for the public meeting and farmers' meeting.

The public meeting will be held on December 13 from 10 am to 12 pm, and the farmers' meeting will be from 1 pm to 2:30 pm. January 10 is the date if we need to reschedule.

Q: Is this meeting just for these two towns?

A: Yes.

6. Data Collection

Jill: This is an update from Nan and Don.

Sewer and water infrastructure data are missing. **From the Town of Callicoon, I need a list from your assessor of any parcels that get a sewer and water bill. The Assessor for the Town of Callicoon, Bonnie Hubert, also does the assessing for the Village of Jeffersonville.** Tess gave me this information for the Town of Delaware. This information will hopefully guide future residential growth, leaving open space intact.

Don can use this to start doing the mapping.

Jim Scheutzow: The Town of Delaware is at maximum capacity right now; we have no place to go for further residential growth that is served by sewer and water.

Jill: We will let Nan know that.

Jill: Comments on surveys, press release, and agri-service list due to me by next Friday. If you want to check over the farmers list, please do so now.

The next meeting will be on Thursday, November 20. Even if we don't have all the data by then, we can use that time to prepare for the meetings. We will switch to 7:00 pm since it's darker out. The meeting will be at the Town of Callicoon Town Hall.

Q: What happens after all these meetings?

A (Jill): Nan analyzes the data, then we brainstorm about what people want to see, and create strategies for getting there.

To Do:

- Get all comments on surveys, PSA, press release, and distribution lists to SCDPEM by Friday October 24 (All committee members)
- Test out the survey on some farmers who are not part of the committees (Paul Hahn)
- Get an accurate statement on agriculture's prominence in Sullivan County's economy from the Partnership for Economic Development (SCDPEM)
- Add CCE to the press release (SCDPEM)
- Create posters for local bulletin boards, post offices, etc. (Melinda Ketchum)
- Add a reminder about the survey to monthly newsletter (Joe Walsh)
- Discuss advertisements and program features with WJFF program committee (Dick Riseling)
- Discuss roundtable features with Thunder Country (Dick Riseling)
- Get a list of parcels that have municipal water and sewer service for the Town of Callicoon and the Village of Jeffersonville
- Find out consultants' turnaround time for survey results (SCDPEM)