

## *Callicoon & Delaware Farmland Protection Plan Committee Meeting, 2-19-09*

Present:

Linda Babicz

Tom Bose

Alice Diehl

John Gain

Stefan Gieger

Melinda Ketcham

Don Meltz

Jim Scheutzow

Jill Weyer

Jennifer Mall

### *1. Review of Scope of Work Timeline*

First Step: Data gathering (surveys, workshops)

Second Step: Develop a vision for the future of agriculture

Third Step: Develop strategies to achieve that vision

Currently, we're moving from step one to step two.

### *2. Checklist of Data in the Profile/ Inventory*

a. Farm information: important to know the locations and descriptions of farms, including accessory properties. The amount of land used for various ag purposes is often much greater than community members realize, so it's important to be able to illustrate this.

b. LESA Analysis (Land Evaluation & Site Assessment): "Land evaluation" refers to the soil properties, etc. on a given parcel. "Site analysis" refers to characteristics of the site location, for example its proximity to roads, sewer lines, and other infrastructure.

c. Buildout analysis.

### *3. December 13 Workshop Summary*

Some general findings from the workshops:

a. Farming is an industry that brings money into the area and keeps it here—unlike some other industries that might employ people but then send their profits back out of the area to corporate headquarters.

b. Agriculture defines who you are as a town.

c. Residents and officials don't understand agriculture—there is a disconnect.

d. Some challenges (like the economy, technological changes, etc.) are beyond farmers' control, making it even harder to sustain and preserve agriculture.

e. An interesting approach mentioned at the workshops was for the owners of at-risk farms to sell to a non-profit agency or maybe a government agency, restricting their use so that they stay in production—this would probably happen at the county or regional level, rather than at the town level.

4. *Farmer Survey Results*
  - a. Most farms are dairy or livestock, although there are many other enterprises.
  - b. Most farmers do not participate in farmers' markets.
  - c. Regarding the farmland protection strategies: an interesting finding is that farmers strongly support exclusive agricultural zones, which are extremely restrictive (and to our knowledge none exist in NY). Yet overlay zoning districts receive less support, although they're not quite so restrictive. (Often survey questions raise more questions than they answer.)
  
5. *Agribusiness Survey Results*
  - a. 31% of responding businesses do not cater exclusively to farmers.
  
6. *Moving Forward with the Data Collected*
  - a. Next step: SWOT Analysis (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats) to move from the data to the vision. Strengths and weaknesses are local factors, whereas opportunities and threats are external forces (for example, the price of milk).
  - b. Map work: LESA is used to rank farms and prioritize which farms we should focus on protecting. Priority farms will be targeted when applying for grants, low-interest loans, and other help. The State wants to see that we have an objective process to determine how farms are ranked.
    - i. How to rank the farms? This is up to the committee.
    - ii. The County already has a ranking system, which they use when applying for PDR (purchase of development rights) programs on behalf of local farms. This is a good starting point, but the committee can modify it as needed.
    - iii. Different ways of looking at prioritizing: If a farm is close to a village, we might say that farm needs to be protected or else it will be developed and the village will continue to sprawl out into other ag land. Or we might say that farm is not a high priority because there are farms farther from town that preserve larger tracts of land, are less impacted by development, etc.
  
7. *SWOT, Town level questionnaire*
  - a. **Homework for next time:**
    - i. **Look at the SWOT analysis (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats) included in tonight's packet. Make suggestions for adding to or modifying it.**
    - ii. **Fill out the included questionnaire, "Is Your Town Planning a Future for Agriculture?"**
  
8. *Questions & Discussion:*
  - a. How do we keep the public informed and interested about this process?
    - Post survey and workshop results on your Town websites
    - run an article in the newspapers to let people know the results are online
    - invite planning board and town board members to committee meetings

-put out a press release to publicize the workshop and survey results

- b. The Columbia Land Conservancy has some great information about state and federal tax programs available to farmers: go to **clctrust.org**
9. *Next Steps:*
- a. **Next meeting Thursday, March 19, 7:00 pm.** Location will be either the Town of Callicoon Town Hall or the Jeffersonville Village Hall, depending on availability.
  - b. Don will bring the results of the map analysis to the March meeting.
  - c. We should plan another farmers' focus group, to discuss the map results—probably sometime in April. To be discussed at the March meeting.

**To Do:**

**SC Planning** will contact the local newspapers and ask if they will write articles about the workshop and survey results.

**Nan** will write a press release to use as a starting point for the newspaper articles.

**Committee members** will fill out the questionnaire “Is Your Town Planning a Future for Agriculture?”

**Committee members** will look at the SWOT analysis and make suggestions for modifying it.