

Hello Everyone,

Here are the minutes from the April farmland protection meeting. **The next meeting will be Thursday, May 21st at 7:00 pm.** Location to be determined.

Jill, Paul, and I spoke with Nan and Don this week, and the plan for the May meeting is to look at the buildout analysis (how our zoning will shape future development, and how that will affect agriculture), and move into some strategies for farmland protection.

Callicoon & Delaware Farmland Protection Plan Committee Meeting, 4/16/09

Present:

Virginia Andkjar	Linda Babicz
Mary Tonjes	Alice Diehl
John Gain	Sonja Hedlund
Wes Gillingham	Paul Hahn
Don Meltz	Jennifer Mall
Jill Weyer	Jim Hughson
Melinda Ketcham	Earl Myers
Jim Scheutzow	Nan Stolzenburg

1. Review of Vision and Goals- Draft 2

a. Vision looks good, except the first sentence which could be changed to read something like “Our entire community is optimistic about and unwavering in its support for and involvement in agriculture in our Town.” This would make it stronger.

b. Goals and Objectives:

1. Goal 1 Objective 1: “land use regulations are enacted to support...”

2. Goal 1 Objective 5: make clearer that we’re talking about support from the county government.

3. Goal 2 Objective 7: “Identify and attract related businesses that support our farms.”

4: Goal 3: Add an objective about increasing public participation in agriculture.

5. Goal 3: Add an objective about farm to school programs.

6. Goal 4: Add an objective about encouraging non-farm landowners to allow their land to be used for agriculture.

7. Goal 4: Maybe add an objective (here or elsewhere) about protecting roads.

8: Goal 4, Objective 4: We will explain purchase, lease and transfer of development rights as we go into the strategies, then decide if we want to keep them in the plan.

9. Goal 5: Add an objective about making sure development is done in a responsible way to protect farms (this could mean gas drilling, wind farms, subdivisions, etc.)

c. Discussion of gas drilling:

1. The only control that towns have over gas drilling is regulating it through road maintenance regulations and real property taxes.

2. So perhaps the best way to make sure it’s done properly is to focus on educating farmers about their rights and how to negotiate leases.

3. Letter from John Kline, suggesting that we talk to municipal leaders in towns where drilling has taken place, to find out more about its positive and negative impacts on farmers, and incorporate these findings into the plan.

4. Comment that the location and type of drilling is related to whether drilling can help farms.

2. Defining Agriculture

a. Discussion of the various definitions presented (White Creek, NYS Ag & Markets)

1. General agreement that the White Creek definition matches our ideas—we can modify it to suit our towns. This definition describes an activity, the location, and the production of things.

3. Overview of Profile/ Inventory

- a. see draft table of contents

4. Upcoming Tasks

- a. May: finish prioritization
- b. June: profile and inventory data/ document (Nan will bring a draft document to the next meeting)
goals
buildout (this is the next analysis we'll do)
- c. July: strategies and actions (start discussions)—maybe we will move this up in time, and begin sooner.

5. Prioritization model

a. Crop yields: we can't know this right now—applicants must show records of their crop yields when seeking PDR. Sullivan County uses crop yields as a criterion instead of prime soils, because we don't have many prime soils.

1. Red shale: it's good for us, but the State doesn't consider it prime soil. It is usually where development happens, so we should not ignore it. Maybe SWCS could provide us their list of prime soils.

b. Road frontage

1. decrease the amounts required, because most of our farms don't have thousands of feet of road frontage.

2. or, switch the point system so that town roads get more points than county or state roads (because people want to buy homes on large tracts of land on quiet back roads—so farms on these roads are more pressured by development than farms closer to major roads).

c. Proximity to water and sewer

1. maybe hamlets need to invest in infrastructure, to relieve development pressure.

d. Distance from hamlet or village

1. delete this criterion

e. Significant natural resources

1. add Upper Delaware National Scenic and Rec. River, Callicoon Creek, Scenic Byway

2. add century farms

3. consider the uniqueness of the Beechwoods area: the High Alleghany- oak hickory forest ecotone is an important wildlife corridor.

f. Proximity to viable agricultural lands

1. shrink the radius, because under the 3 mile radius, virtually all farms will receive 10 points.

g. Acreage to be protected

1. shrink the acreage, because the largest parcel in our two towns is 240 acres.

h. Preserved Properties

1. this criterion was left off the list. It awards points to farms that are near properties already under easement. The closer you are to a preserved farm, the more points you get.

i. add a criterion about ag assessments?

j. add a criterion about age of farmer? This would help to identify farms most at risk of being sold by retiring farmers. Unfortunately there is no way to know until a farmer applies for funds or programs.