

## Farmland Protection Plan Committee Meeting, 10/15/09.

Stefan Gieger	Sonja Hedlund
Linda Babicz	Jennifer Mall
John Gain	Earl Myers
Alice Diehl	Jim Scheutzow
Paul Hahn	Nan Stolzenburg
Joe Horak	Rosie DeCristofaro

Public Input Session Thursday,  
November 19<sup>th</sup> at 7:00 pm, at the  
Town of Callicoon Town Hall.  
Please be here and be ready to  
help facilitate our discussion!

### Discussion of the Draft Plan:

Suggestion to mention the County's Green Vision Statement and Committee on Sustainable Policies in the plan.

**Vision Statement:** we know that dairy farms are struggling, and maybe it's not likely that they will remain the predominant form of agriculture or expand in the future. But the vision statement is what we *want to happen*; not what we *suspect will happen*. And while there are relatively few dairy farms, they make up most of the farming land base, and they are very important economically. If we want to maintain those farms, or even increase them, then we need to state it in the vision statement. The rest of the plan is designed to support this vision statement.

The key to success is leadership—we should investigate agricultural commissions in Massachusetts. They are well established, and accomplish a lot of great things—even without the framework that we're creating here with the farmland protection plans. They succeed because they have strong leadership and political will. See their website at [www.masagcom.org](http://www.masagcom.org)

**LESA:** Now that we've identified farmland with high LESA scores, what can a Planning Board do if a high scored parcel comes up for subdivision?

They can be sure to ask about agriculture in their review—what impact will the subdivision have on surrounding farms? Consideration of active ag fields and access roads is especially important. Agriculture should be considered the same way that environmental constraints (steep slopes, wetlands, etc.) are considered. The Planning Board can then work with the applicant to minimize impacts on agriculture, by moving buildings around, for example, or imposing conditions (like buffers, etc.) on their approval. Finally, the SEQR process requires that an applicant state whether agriculture will be impacted by his or her proposed action.

The Planning Board has the authority to make a lot of changes to subdivision proposals. But we need to establish a clear set of expectations for them to follow.

The maps created for this plan can also help us to adjust zoning districts to minimize impacts on agriculture.

### **Questions from Nan:**

1. How big do we want the maps to be, in the final plan?

Let's use 8.5x11, and enlarge the legend a bit so people can read it.

2. How many copies do we need to make available for the public?

Two or three for each town hall, and one for each library (Jeff and Callicoon).

3. What should be the format of the Executive Summary?

Let's use the "Ag Plan Highlights" sheet, but change the wording to be specific to each town. We will augment it a little bit, to include a description of what the plan is, and why it is important. So it will be closer to 2 pages long.

### **Other Questions and Discussions:**

**IDA:** What are IDA's parameters? What can they do for farms?

They help with tax abatement on new buildings, which is something that farmers get without IDA.

They are somewhat limited because they focus on projects that involve a small amount of space and create a lot of jobs, and farming uses a lot of space and creates relatively few jobs.

Could the IDA buy dairy processing equipment and lease it to farmers or some ag entity, the way they did with the Dancing Cat Distillery equipment?

Perhaps—this is the sort of recommendation that we need to make in our plan. We need to encourage local entities to think outside the box.

As part of the plan's implementation, we will look into what IDAs in other counties do for farms. See Lewis County, NY for examples.

**Gas Drilling:** There is a documentary showing currently, called "Split Estate." It focuses on the experiences of Colorado residents with gas drilling. If you have Time Warner Cable, it's on Channel 113/841. On DirecTV, it's channel 286, and on Dish Network it's channel 194. You can see it on October 22<sup>nd</sup> at 11PM EDT, or October 23<sup>rd</sup> at 3 PM EDT. (go to <http://splitestate.com> for more information).

Discussion of the SC Partnership's recent presentation on gas drilling, which showed that the Partnership seems fully supportive of gas drilling. Disappointment that the presentation was so one-sided and industry representatives made statements that attendees believe are false.

Generic Environmental Impact Statement: public comment session on October 28<sup>th</sup> at Sullivan County Community College.

### **To Do for the November 19<sup>th</sup> meeting:**

Jen: work on a press release for the meetings.

Nan: bring the Executive Summary, large maps, and a 10-15 minute PowerPoint presentation to introduce and summarize the plan.

Nan: prepare a list of tasks and questions. If we get enough people, we will break down into small groups and the committee members will facilitate the small group discussions using Nan's list.

If you have questions or need copies of any materials, call SC Planning at 807-0527.