

Town of Ancram
Agriculture & Farmland Protection Plan Project Team Meeting
January 5, 2008
5-6 PM

Present: Art Bassin, Sue Bassin, Carl Butler, Barry Chase, Kyle Lougheed, Don MacLean, Harry Miller, Jerry Peele, Dennis Sigler, Bob Wilcox, Leah Wilcox, Nan Stolzenburg

Absent: Doug Brenner, Judi Francis, Frank Martucci, Marnie MacLean

The meeting was called to order by Art Bassin at 5 PM.

The Committee reviewed and approved the prior minutes.

1. Grant Status: Mr. Bassin reported that we had not yet heard back from John Brennan at the NY State Department of Ag & Markets regarding the contract for our Farmland Protection Plan. Given the current financial situation of the State, Mr. Bassin expressed concern that the Town's Farmland Protection Grant of \$25,000 might be delayed for a period of time.

2. Issues and Concerns: The Committee reviewed the issues identified in the prior minutes and agreed we had captured the important ones.

3. Comp Plan Strategies: The Committee discussed the draft Comp Plan Strategies related to open space and agriculture. The following items were discussed:

a. Mr. MacLean asked who would own or manage the 60% "open space" created by the proposed open space development requirement. Ms. Stolzenburg said the open space could be owned and managed by a farmer or landowner, a homeowner association or by a conservation group which held the easement.

b. Mr. Sigler asked how the record keeping on the subdivided parcels would work long term. Ms. Stolzenburg indicated that the method would be pretty much the same as it was today, with the parcels development status noted on the town's tax maps.

c. Mr. Peele asked how things would work if a farmer has four kids and wanted to divide up a 200 acre parcel among the four of them. In this case, assuming there was no development contemplated, each child could get 50 acres, and each 50 acre parcel would be subject to the 60% open space rule and 3.5 acre average lot size per acre.

d. Mr. Wilcox pointed out that the 60% open space rule had to apply to all landowners, not just to farmers.

e. Ms. Stolzenburg noted that it was important to define exactly what counted toward “open space” and what did not. Driveways, laws etc probably should not count as open space.

f. Mr. Wilcox asked how you protected farms from nuisance lawsuits for noise and smells, and who was responsible for letting buyers know they are buying into a farming and giving them the disclosures about living in an AG District. Ms. Stolzenburg commented that that a town right-to-farm law prevented nuisance law suits, and that realtors were responsible for advising buyers of the Ag District disclosures, but suggested that the Town Planning Board should also consider providing this information to developers.

g. Mr. Wilcox asked if the Comp Plan strategies covered the issues and concerns we had previously identified. After a brief review the Committee concluded they did.

h. The committee agreed it was important to get County input as part of the Farmland Protection Planning effort.

i) Ms. Stolzenburg commented it was important to keep the Town Assessor informed an the process of developing the Farmland Protection Plan so tax so property tax incentives could be used to their maximum extent to assist farmers.

4. New Members: The Committee discussed who else we should try to get involved in the Farmland Protection Planning process. Mr. Sigler suggested Jim Davenport, or his daughter if we wanted to add a young person to the Committee. The Committee asked Mr. Sigler to follow up with the Davenports and try to get either or both Jim or his daughter. Ms. Bassin suggested adding large landowners to the Committee who were not farmers, but who might be interested in leasing land to farmers. Mr. Wilcox suggested getting “infrastructure’ people involved – tractor sales and service, vets, grain dealers, etc. Ms. Bassin suggested adding marketing and retailing people who could help us think about how to sell form products to consumers.

5. Project Plan Review: Mr. Bassin suggested that the Committee focus on finalizing the Project Plan at the next meeting. Major elements of the project plan should be 1) a zoning review to determine what changes need to be made to support agriculture and farmland protection 2) inventorying farms and farmland and 3) interviewing farmers and landowners.

6. Next Meeting – The Agriculture and Farmland Protection Plan Project Team will meet again on Monday, February 2 at 5PM at the Town Hall.