

**Town of Bethlehem
Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan
Study Advisory Committee Meeting**



SUMMARY OF MEETING JUNE 23, 2008
Bethlehem Town Hall Room 101 – 7:00 PM

Members Present: Lynn Dente, Tom Gallagher, Paul Kleinke, George Leveille, Stuart Lyman, Nancy Neff, Chuck Preska, Tim Stanton, Bob Verstandig, Jr., Giles Wagoner; Liz Brock, Debbie Kitchen, Robert Leslie, Laurie Ten Eyck

Welcome/Introductions

- Supervisor Cunningham opened the meeting with welcoming remarks.
- Study Advisory Committee members, AFT, and Town staff provided introductions.
- John Brennan from NYS Department of Agriculture and Markets described the States funding program for the development of Municipal Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plans.

Expectations/Roles: committee, consultant, public, Town

- Town provided a brief discussion of the purpose and goals of the Plan and the Study Advisory Committee's tasks, responsibilities, and term of appointment.

Comprehensive Plan Background – Framework for Agricultural and Farmland Plan

- Town provided a discussion of the framework for Agricultural and Farmland Protection as discussed in the Town's 2005 Comprehensive Plan.
- There was discussion regarding a definition for the term "protection". The Albany County Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan's definition from the Agriculture and Markets Law Article 25AAA sec.322 for agriculture and farmland protection was recited – "the preservation, conservation, management and improvement of lands which are part of viable farming operations, for the purpose of encouraging such lands to remain in agricultural production." This will be the working definition of protection for the committee subject to change during the course of the planning process.

Review Draft Work Plan

- AFT reviewed the draft work plan for the Study and indicated that it is a working document and changes could be made as the Study progresses, if necessary.
- There was discussion regarding the rating system listed under the Vision/Goals/Objectives phase, and its need or requirement by New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets. Members indicated that the rating system would remain; however, the SAC would address its need once they discuss the Vision/Goals/Objectives of the Study.

Data Collection

- Town indicated they have started to follow the work plan and the data collection phase is under way.
- Town presented the process of developing the Agriculture and Farmland Map, which included agricultural assessment, agricultural district, and NYS ORPS data. Members identified several properties that contained inaccurate ORPS land use data (i.e., livestock, dairy farm, field crops). Each member received a

SUMMARY OF MEETING JUNE 23, 2008

PAGE 2 OF 2

copy of the map, list of properties receiving agricultural assessment, and list of properties participating in the Agricultural District. Members recommended the Town/AFT should research FSA data, in conjunction with Cornell Cooperative Extension, to update the inaccurate land use data.

- AFT stated they have the capability to conduct 10 – 15 interviews.
- Town/AFT suggested committee members could be interviewed, with additional individuals in the Town's farming/agriculture industry to complete the 10-15 interviews.
- SAC members listed several potential interviewees based on their review of the map and agriculture assessment and district lists.
 - Jim Bohl
 - Jim Frueh
 - John Guertze
 - Dave Hillman
 - Jay Jakovic/Magee
 - Linda Jasinski
 - Bill Kolber
 - Rick Lesser
 - Tom Newell
 - John Mead
 - Jen Preska
 - Michael Stanton
 - Mike Waldenmaier
- SAC members received a copy of the sample questions (themes) that are to be discussed with interviewees.

Set Next Committee Meeting Date

- July 21, 2008 at 7PM in Town Hall Room 101

Action Items:

- SAC to review interview questions (themes)
- SAC to perform field check of agriculture and farmland map and mark-up map with corrections (to bring to next meeting) or email/contact Rob with corrections
- Town/AFT to review FSA data in conjunction with Cornell Coop
- Town/AFT to prepare draft list of interviewees
- Town/AFT to prepare tentative meeting schedule

Topics for July 21 Meeting:

- Review/Finalize interview questions (themes)
- Review/Finalize draft list of interviewees
- Review/Finalize draft notice letter to interviewees
- Review SAC's results of field check of Agriculture and Farmland map
- Present/review findings from FSA research
- Present tentative meeting schedule
- Roundtable discussion of Strengths/Weaknesses/Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) to the agricultural community in the Town of Bethlehem.