

Washington County Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan  
Steering Committee

March 1, 2016 at ASA's office in Greenwich

**Meeting Notes**

Present: Ted Blomgren, Renee Bouplon, Brian Gilchrist, Lisa Oswald, Teri Ptacek, Lisa Randles, Nan Stolzenburg

Absent: Corrina Aldrich, Dave Campbell, Dan Hicks, Jay Skellie, Karen Weinberg, Bob Wiederhold

Guest: Chris Krahling, Project Manager at ASA

Meeting commenced at 7:00pm

The committee discussed the status of interviews with farmers and ag-related businesses. Teri mentioned that interviews with dairy farmers are challenging in terms of farmers not having ideas to implement at the county level. For some they just want to ensure that the county keeps agriculture a priority. At a January meeting with representatives of NYS Dept. of Agriculture and Markets, it was suggested to focus more on the needs of small to mid-size dairies since the bigger farms have other resources for assistance. Nan discussed how Jefferson County, which is almost all dairy farms, is trying to assist farmers be more productive and lower their costs by creating local assistance programs. She will research how those local programs are funded. Renee suggested that we need to think at least regionally, not just county-wide, for programs or projects that might assist dairy farmers. *The target date to complete all interviews is April 15<sup>th</sup>.*

The committee also discussed the two farmer workshops and the two focus groups (ag related businesses/ag service organizations and county supervisors) that have occurred since January. Nan provided a brief summary of the results of the farmer workshops. Another focus group for ag economic development (include tourism, LDC, chambers of commerce, etc.) is tentatively scheduled for March 30<sup>th</sup> in the morning. Todd Erling of the Hudson Valley Agribusiness Development Corporation will facilitate the discussion. Renee, Teri and Laura will work on the invitee list.

Chris Krahling of ASA gave a presentation on how ASA prioritized farmland when drafting their new Farmland Conservation Plan, which identifies priority areas and special areas. ASA determined the most important criteria based on their program and then assigned a value to each criterion. The criteria included: parcels in current agricultural production, prime soils, statewide important or unique soils, within ¼ mile of conserved land, within 1/8 mile of current agricultural parcels and within 100 feet of water resource.

Nan then discussed the Land Evaluation and Site Assessment (LESA), which is a tool to help citizens and local officials prioritize those lands that should be protected from conversation to nonagricultural uses. Both the towns of Granville and White Creek used LESA to prioritize

farmland in their town farmland protection plans. She also provided examples from Dutchess, Sullivan, Orange counties and discussed what factors went into each county's decision on how to prioritize.

Renee also mentioned that the town of Hartford's farmland protection plan contained written criteria based on the state farmland protection program with additional factors to consider when used to prioritize farmland for conservation, but it did not identify properties on maps. She also mentioned that some towns, such as Hoosick, just referred to ASA's farmland conservation plan. The requirement for the grant is that the committee discuss prioritizing farmland and incorporate it in the plan, but there is no specific requirement on the approach taken.

The committee had an extensive discussion on what is useful for prioritizing farmland, what is the purpose prioritizing farmland, and how will it help the ag community. The committee's preliminary thoughts for the purpose of prioritizing farmland was to:

- 1) Identify soils/land that are important to ag viability and sustainability
- 2) Identify lands to help with municipal planning (direct growth away from good farmland)
- 3) Identify land to help with purchase of development rights program (and to support towns with farmland plans and serve those that do not have plans)

The committee wishes to get feedback on those committee members that were not present. Nan discussed that some prioritize to help target for educational purposes, such as educational programming and other funding programs. The committee inquired whether we could get maps that showed the break down of the use of the land in the county by ag sector (dairy, crops, pasture, horticulture, livestock, etc.) using property code classifications. Renee will inquire with the county's Real Property Office.

Brian inquired on what percentage of Washington County is in agriculture compared to the percentages of other counties. He also suggested getting numbers for various commodities.

A recommendation for the plan is to get a list of all current farms and their contact information and have resources available to maintain the list.

The next step is for Nan and ASA to draft goals and a vision statement for the plan based on feedback to date and then circulate it to the committee for feedback. Renee will do a doodle poll to establish a meeting date for early April.

Meeting adjourned 9:45pm.