

Town of Ancram
Agriculture & Farmland Protection Plan Project Team Meeting
February 2, 2008
5-6 PM

Present: Art Bassin, Barry Chase, Harold Miller, Dennis Sigler,

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

The Committee reviewed and approved the minutes of the January 5 meeting.

1. Grant Status: Mr. Bassin reported that he had talked to John Brennan at the NY State Department of Ag & Markets, who confirmed we would be getting the \$25,000 grant. Mr. Brennan indicated the funds would probably be part of the 2009 budget, which suggested we may receive the funding when the State budget is finally approved. The Committee decided to focus on what could be done now, without the \$25,000 grant.

2. Agricultural Strategies: The Committee discussed possible no-cost or low-cost strategies and activities that would promote agriculture and protect farmland. The following items were discussed:

-Mr. Miller and Mr. Sigler suggested there was a need to better explain the state ag property tax exemption programs; Mr. Miller noted that the requirement for \$10,000 in annual farm revenues was set back in 1972, and should probably be changed to \$50,000 today. Mr. Bassin noted that Councilwoman Donna Hoyt was interested in understanding how the ag exemptions worked, and we might be able to work with her to sort this out and communicate the program to the Community.

-Mr. Chase suggested we conduct an inventory of farmland not in use, and survey farmers and large landowners to determine who owned farmland and who was leasing and farming it, what crops were being farmed and what the scope of agricultural activity in Ancram was. Mr. Sigler suggested we try to get a hold of the town level data from the recent agricultural census farmers were asked to fill out. Mr. Bassin will check to see if town level data is available.

-Mr. Miller indicated it was important to develop an educational program to help landowners unfamiliar with farming understand the basics of farming in terms of economics, crop rotation, the use of herbicides in some cases, smells, etc.

-The Committee discussed the possibility of hosting a series of "Ancram Farm Day" tours where farms would be open to the Community and different farm activities would be highlighted and explained. The Ancram Preservation Group had sponsored this kind of activity in recent years, which the Committee viewed as successful and useful in promoting agriculture and helping the non-farmers in

the Community understand better that farming was a business, and what was necessary for the business to be successful.

-The committee discussed the possibility of hosting a meetings for landowners who might be interested in having their lands worked by local farmers to discuss the issues involved in this kind of relationship.

-The Committee discussed the need for an educational brochure covering “Farming in Ancram” which would give local residents information about the variety of farms operating in the town, the economic value added to the community in terms of jobs and spending generated by farms, and the environmental and open space value of agriculture.

-In addition, the Committee discussed the need to develop a product brochure which would identify and promote locally grown foods and restaurants and stores that carried locally grown foods. Things like Hudson Valley Fresh products, Ronny Brooke Ice Cream, Thompson-Finch fruits and vegetables, Herondale beef, pork and chickens, locally produced cheeses and eggs, etc. The Committee agreed it was important to get a complete list of locally produced foods, and to keep the list updated and on the town web site as well as in the brochure.

-The Committee noted that we might be able to get some help for these brochure and educational efforts from the Cornell Ag Extension Service, the Columbia County Tourism office, and private organizations which support agriculture and farmland preservation, like the American Farmland Trust and Glynwood Center. (Note: Ms. Virginia Kisinki from Glynwood will be joining us at the 3/2 meeting to discuss the Glynwood “Keep Farming” program.)

-The Committee discussed the importance of discussing with large non-farmer landowners what their long term plans were, and decided to ask Don Meltz to develop a list of the ownership of all farmable parcels (over 10 acres?) by using the GIS and the property tax data base. This might have to wait until we get the grant, it will cost money to do.

-The Committee also decided it would be important to develop and conduct whatever surveys we planned to do soon, so we could get they survey done in the next 30-60 days – so we did not interfere with spring planting activities.

-The Committee made a preliminary list of farmers and landowners to include in the survey. This list is attached as exhibit A, and will be refined at our next few meetings.

-The Committee again discussed the need for a slaughterhouse in the area.

3. 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 include the

elements we talked about today, including: 1) a zoning review to determine what changes need to be made to support agriculture and farmland protection; 2) inventorying and surveying farms, farmers and farmland; 3) interviewing farmers and landowners; 4) developing educational and locally grown product support programs, web site support tools and brochures; 5) organizing regular Farm Day Tours of local farms; 6) promoting Ancram's role as an "historic agricultural community" to help stimulate economic development; and 7) seeking support and assistance from organizations with the experience and skills to help improve the profitability and sustainability of agriculture in Ancram.

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

Appendix A: Preliminary List Of Farmers and Farm Landowners

Farmers: Owners or operators (acres farmed/owned)

MacLean
Davenport
Millerhurst
Peele
Sommerhoff
RonnyBrooke
Greg Pulver
Jeff Pulver
Lloyd Vail
Harold Brooks
Dennis Sigler
Coach Farm
Phil Peeples
Rothvoss
Ken Main
George Beneke
Peggy/Larry Lampman
Dutska
Randy Puris
Niver/Clapper Farm
Arthur Hyde
LaCasse
Coach Farm
Broe
Slott
Wilcox
Bassin
Lutz
Roy Sloane

Farm Landowners (acres owned/leased)

Baxt
Webb; C Bryant

Clay

Martucci

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