

APPROVED – APRIL 23, 2013

**Farmland Protection Committee  
Meeting Minutes from March 26, 2013**

Meeting called to order by Co-Chair, Edgar Masters at 7 pm.

**Attendance:** Jeanne Mettler, Town Board liaison; Geroge Beneke, Co-Chair, Ejay Eisen, Bill Kiernan, Marcia Becker. Excused was Lia Babitch, Christie Hegarty. Marcia Becker volunteered to record the Minutes.

**Guest Speaker** was introduced: Sue Bassin from the Ancram Agriculture and Farmland Protection Plan committee began her presentation. Points of discussion follow:

- Consultant Nan Stotlzenberg (sp?) worked in an integrated way with Ancram on the Comprehensive Plan, the Zoning Revisions and the Agriculture Protection Plan for an efficient approach. There were farmers on all 3 committees.
- Town Survey identified agriculture, open space, water, and natural resources as of primary importance to the Town.
- Some issues of zoning were included in the Comp Plan.
- Agriculture Plan grants money was used in part for zoning regulations.
- Comp Plan and Zoning Committee met every week.
- Survey was given to farmers focusing on operators. They were identified by assessor & local knowledge. There was a concentration on large farms because they have the largest impact on the towns.
- Vacant farmland was included in their plan.
- In Ancram 15% of the households depend on farming, yet farmers are not vocal. Contractors are a smaller % but are more vocal.
- In Ancram ½ of farmland is rented. Farms that “went out” remained in some sort of agricultural use.
- How much farm land has been lost? 2% per decade to residential development. They have only one large development in Ancram- Long Lake which is an early Conservation Subdivision.
- How to protect farmland that is sold? Integrated into zoning.
- Ejay asked about “ancillary agricultural business” such as slaughter houses. Lots of discussing ensued focusing on marketing, demand and distribution. No conclusion reached. There are processors that work in batches so that a supplier can market their own brand.
- Ancram has a water study done by S. Winkley and they used the information as an “overlay” in order to require “Best Farm Practices” and buffer zones.
- Sue believes much more water quality and quantity data should have been included in the planning and encourages Copake to do more than Ancram has.
- Water quantity is a concern to farmers. Water quality is a concern to people.
- There is a history of pesticide and herbicide use and Long Lake is showing its impacts with algae blooms. Copake has much more of a water concern than

Ancram because of all the residential development around the water bodies as well as the impact from agriculture use.

- Sue brought up the Ancram CAC “Council” which is advisory, and their inventory work. She would like to see Copake start data collection by monitoring wells – test the quality. There would be a lot of public support for those efforts.
- County Agricultural Plan has no implementation strategies, and it may not be accepted by John Brennan.
- EJay asked about marketing to local people. Sue talked about the Ancram Farming initiative – brochure, maps, and signs. No farmers market because of lack of traffic through the 3 Ancram Hamlets.

### **Remainder of the meeting**

Approved the Minutes of February 26

Agreed to keep meetings to 2 hours

Discussion of presentation. Ancram did not focus on small farms and start-ups which seem to be important in Copake - the next wave. Marcia asked about a work plan. Bill mentioned farms in transition from one harvest to a new harvest (cows to crops for example). George mentioned “minimal tillage farming” along the Roe Jan Kill without crop rotation or buffering, and extensive fencing done by Shagbark and impacts of both. Edgar mentioned that a lot of information for this project already exists and he wants to complete the project in a timely manner (one year). EJay mentioned committing to farming 7 acres only because he could not manage a larger parcel without tractors, etc.

### **How to proceed**

Create a RFP and look for consultant. Create an inventory of all farmland and farm operations. Who is doing what where and on what soil? Survey farm operators (also owners?)

### **Next meeting**

April 23, and going forward the 4<sup>th</sup> Tuesday of every month.

### **Meeting adjourned 9 pm**

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