

- Enhancing Partnerships, Collaboration and Communication

Strategies

The first recommendation is the formation of an Agricultural Advisory Committee. This committee will guide the implementation of the strategies identified in this Plan. The Plan will only reach its full potential if the farm community together with the Town Board and Agricultural Advisory Committee cooperate to bring the Plan to fruition. Some other highlights of the recommendations include:



- Establish a local farmland protection plan, perhaps funded through a community preservation fund
- Assist the Planning Board and ZBA with training and tools to help enhance the evaluation of a potential projects impact on agriculture in the Town.
- Inventory smaller plots of land suitable for farming, and work with Columbia Land Conservancy to further develop programs that match available farmland with those seeking land to farm.
- Partner with organizations such as Glynwood Center to attract interns and new farmers to Town.
- Work with the Taconic Hills Central School District to enhance career and technical training about agriculture for students.
- Develop a 'Come Farm With Us' website, or page on the existing website to attract new farmers to the Town. This is part of a larger program to enhance marketing of Copake as a great place to farm.
- Expand buy-local programs and support efforts to help farmers market their produce locally, through direct sales, and regionally. This includes working to develop food hub and other aggregators to help farmers collect and transport their products to market.
- Collaborate with other resources in the Town, County and region.

This summary is an overview of the Copake Agriculture and Farmland Protection Plan. The complete plan can be found at www.townofcopake.org and at Town Hall.

SUMMARY OF THE AGRICULTURAL AND FARMLAND PROTECTION PLAN

TOWN OF COPAKE, NOVEMBER 2014

Farming has been a way of life in Copake and continues to be a significant part of our local economy. In 2011, Copake adopted a Comprehensive Plan that identified and celebrated the role of agriculture in the Town and set in motion plans to ensure that it stays the backbone of the community.

Continuing in that tradition, the Town's Comprehensive Plan Committee, on behalf of the Town, sought and received a grant from the New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets to develop a town-level plan to protect and enhance agriculture. The grant tasked the Town to locate farm areas that should be protected, look at the value of farmland open space and the agricultural economy to the municipality, evaluate consequences of possible conversion, and describe opportunities, programs and strategies to promote continued agricultural use. A local committee was established to develop this Plan for Copake.

The Copake Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan is designed to offer the Town a toolbox of ideas and actions that can be implemented over time to improve agricultural opportunities in Copake, preserve important farmlands, and maintain open lands as part of the landscape.

This Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan will give the Town:

- policies to enhance agriculture as a critical land use in Town;
- opportunities to promote new farm operations;
- mechanisms to help the Town to promote agriculture that produces healthy and locally available food



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healthy and locally available food and a diversity of agriculturally-related products.

- tools the Planning Board can use during project review to protect farms to the maximum extent practical;
- a framework for the Town and interested landowners to promote farming and agri-tourism in Town;
- additional leverage and success in receiving future State aid;
- a timetable for the Town to implement recommendations;



The planning process began with the formation of a Committee, composed of farmers, interested citizens, and Town representatives, and the hiring of a planning consultant to assist. A data base of information and maps, is included which identifies farmlands, factors and trends affecting agriculture in Copake. The Plan is informed by input from both farmers and

the general public.

Public input included meetings of the committee, the development of a farmer/farmland owner survey, interviews, and a public meeting. From these activities, agricultural issues, strengths, weaknesses, and opportunities in Copake were identified. Farmer input was also critical to the development of a vision and specific goals, and a prioritized list of actions to achieve this vision for agriculture in Copake.

This Plan is a record of this process and outlines steps the Town of Copake can take to support farming and agriculture. In summary, the following items are included in the Plan:

Role of Agriculture in Copake

The Plan discusses the prominent role of agriculture in Copake's economy, open space, rural character, sense of community, and overall quality of life. The 2011 Comprehensive Plan establishes that Copake residents hold farms in high regard and know that agriculture contributes to the small town and rural character of the area, and shapes the working landscape they value. Farms in Copake also provide fresh, safe, local food and products. This Plan builds on the 2011 Town of Copake Comprehensive Plan vision statement, which explicitly speaks of agriculture as integral to the Town's future.

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Current Status of Farming

The Plan documents changes in agriculture over time and identifies key trends and pressures facing farmers in Copake today.

Vision and Goals

The Plan establishes a long-range vision for agriculture in the Town. Elements of this vision include

- protecting working landscapes as an integral part of life in Copake;
- supporting a diverse set of agricultural enterprises;
- financial sustainability of farms;
- developing and supporting a new generation of farmers; and
- increasing the availability of local, affordable food.

The Plan sets several goals to support this vision. They are aimed at maintaining rural land use patterns, improving cooperation and communication among agencies and farmers, and promoting environmental sustainability, community character, and economic viability. Specifically, the goals are oriented to address:

- Farmland Protection
- New Farmers and Next Generation of Farmers
- Agricultural Economic Development
- Enhancement of Farm Operations and Practices
- Marketing, Promotion and Sales of Agricultural Products and Services



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