

Ulysses Ag & Farmland Committee Meeting (8 AM at Stick & Stone Farm)
Oct. 13, 2016

Present: Liz Thomas, Chaw Chang, John Wertis, John Gates, Kryz Cail, Monika Roth, Greg Reynolds (late)

Discussed both process and issues related to Ag Zoning draft.

Process Questions

- Funding – NYSERDA Cleaner & Greener Initiative has a goal of reducing greenhouse gas emissions, farmland preservation is considered a good strategy
- Grant ends June 1, 2017
- Ag rep on Zoning plan steering committee? – good to have someone attending meetings to stay abreast of discussions and how we might be able to provide information to the committee
- Concern that consultant has limited experience with rural land use issues and zoning
- Committee hopes to get a draft prepared and then it will go to Planning Board and Zoning Board for review (Ag Committee is pre-emptively providing input so that the draft is not so wrought with issues of concern to farmers)
- Big unanswered question – why is a zoning change needed anyhow? At whose impetus/request? Simply because there was a grant opportunity?
- How/why did a 5 page zoning document become 48 pages of draft?
- Consultants do want to meet with the Ag community (no date set)

Content Questions

- subdivision process – does this need to be changed? Keep simple subdivision simple
- Permitted uses – need to review
- Development pressure does not occur uniformly across the town, therefore, setting up restrictions townwide in ag areas does not make sense...committee wants least amount of restrictions (as per current zoning which seems to be working for ag)
- ag land size...under 20 acres can be used for crop production or for a small enterprise and be viable ag land
- more zoning = more staff time, costly overall to town
- ag is viewed as open space...providing rural character...not as working landscapes providing food, jobs, etc.

Input on draft to date:

- George Frantz comments should be sent to Nancy Zahler, Liz
- Ag & Markets input, still waiting for John Brennan's input; have input from Matt Brower
- anyone else?? – County Planning, AFT?

Next Steps:

- Data Collection (Chaw's handout)
 - acres lost/gained in agriculture for the A-1 zone
 - Ag Assessment data on value of ag land in Town (and land for development?)
 - document increase in land owned by farmers, many inactive acres are now in production
 - Ag District data (surveyed farmers)

Monika and Debbie can work on sleuthing out data...

- Share comments from George Frantz and Ag & Markets

-Research density based zoning and lot area and zoning requirements are poor fits for a zone with little development pressure (Krys do research and write something up)

-Liz will ask Michelle to send ag committee members a clean copy of the current A-1 zone.

-Ag committee members should review the document and be prepared to comment at the 10/20 meeting – what in the current zoning needs to be changed – refer to the Town Ag plan when the committee reviewed the zoning thoroughly...(someone scan the summary table and send out to all)

-Next regular Ag committee meeting: 10/20, 7 PM – agenda to review the current zoning in the A-1 zone. Other town farmers are welcome to attend but this is not intended to be an info meeting to bring all town farmers up to speed on what is being proposed.

-10/26 – next zoning committee meeting – who can attend? (there will only be 5 minutes at most for privilege of the floor if someone wants to speak)

-Ag Plan update – may be needed, but it is not to address the zoning changes

-Develop a work plan based on ag plan – identify actions the committee could take to strengthen ag

-For this year, the work plan is to address proposed zoning changes!

-Expand number of ag committee members – from 5 to 7? Liz said this could be done, but we need to find someone

-Chaw needs to step down as chair because in November they will have a baby and harvest has been delayed due to drought...(No one volunteered to chair; should be a farmer).

-Adjourned 10 AM