

MEETING MINUTES
SALEM COMPREHENSIVE PLAN COMMITTEE
February 5, 2008

Attendees: Steve Alexander, Joseph Childs, Bill Eberle, Bruce Ferguson, Rob Laukaitis, Brigid Nosal, Eileen Ryan, Anita Witten

Guest Speaker: Liz Brock, American Farmland Trust

Liz began her presentation by asking the group what our plans were and why we applied for the grant.

We stated that we are trying to update the Comprehensive Plan and since Salem has significant Agricultural property we felt that the grant would be a way of getting some funding for the agricultural parts of the plan. We stated that some of the consultants we spoke with suggested that an agricultural plan could be a plan within the main Comprehensive plan. We felt that this was a starting point for updating the plan. Steve stated that we applied for the plan with the Village jointly since there is agricultural land within the Village limits.

Liz stated that in the past they have worked with communities in updating zoning codes and subdivision laws to reflect agricultural planning.

Liz gave a brief background on the American Farmland Trust. She stated that if we use the Trust most of the work will be done by her and the Director David Haight. She stated that they are not planners by education but agricultural professionals that help with some planning and developing goals.

Liz stated that after speaking with the Dept. of Agriculture and Markets that she is fairly confident that our application will be funded and that we should know before February 28. She went on to say that if we are awarded the grant, the award date is the date of the contract with the Dept. of Ag and Markets and work can start as soon as the award is made. She said that a written contract from the Dept. may come at a later date but will have the date of the award as the contract date.

Liz provided a sample scope of work from another project they were working on. The scope gave five areas of work 1) Inventory of lands, 2) vision and goals, 3) Policy Recommendations/Strategies, 4) Development of a Protection Plan and 5) an Implementation plan.

Each area had a methodology and a resulting product. Liz reiterated that this was a sample scope and that what we wanted/needed may be different and a scope would be developed for us based on the services we requested. Liz also stated that in general they find that interviews with farmers result in better information than surveys.

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Joseph questioned how the Protection Plan fits in with the designated agricultural districts within the Village. Would the plan be consistent with these districts? He also asked if the plan would define what these districts actually mean and how they are useful to farmers.

Liz stated that the Ag plan would be consistent and may identify that the districts can be further refined or added to - to add more protection to the land. She stated that maps could be developed to show where they are and what they provide. She also said that it could help to develop a Right to Farm law. It was mentioned that the Town already has a right to farm law but the Village did not.

Liz stated that as part of the Comprehensive Plan it would be a section in the plan that focused on how to keep and support farms and agribusinesses within the community. Key stakeholders would be interviewed and community meetings would be held. The final product could come in several forms. It could be a written portion of the plan, it could be glossy type advertisements to promote the land.

Liz stated for maps they would work with the County to update maps. Anita asked about the vision. She confirmed that it would look to the future and not just be a description of the current state. There was also some discussion that the newer types of farms (sheep, alpacas, etc) and not just dairy would need to be included.

Joseph asked if they could help develop and document statistics and changes from year to year. Liz stated that they could help with that. She also mentioned the Agricultural census that is done every 5 years is due out next year and may also provide good information. This census information goes back to the 1960's and may provide good historical data.

Liz stated that the goals they will develop will depend on what we want. She stated that in the past they have worked with other consultants and would do so again if we had another consultant working with us. They have also worked with the Dept. of Agriculture and Markets and will work with them throughout the project to ensure that our final products will meet grant requirements and be approved by them.

Liz passed around a sample budget that they put together for another project. This particular budget had an hourly rate for Liz at \$60/hour and David at \$75/hour. Liz had most of the hours associated with her work. There were also line items for Travel, printing, supplies, communication and other consultants to help with certain language for balloting. These line item costs were generally minimal. Liz stated that for a soup to nuts plan it would be about 300-350 hours and for a smaller role 100-150 hours.

The grants are a two year contract and Ag and Markets will want a product that gets used in determining the land use of the community and not just sit on a shelf. She also

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mentioned that the Farmland Trust is putting on a conference on Feb. 28 in Saratoga at a cost of \$45 if anyone is interested.

NEXT MEETING: MONDAY FEBRUARY 18, 7 p.m. TOWN HALL