

**Salem Comprehensive Plan
Meeting Minutes
August 18, 2008
Town Hall 7 p.m.**

Attendees: Chuck Alexander, Steve Alexander, Joseph Childs, Bill Eberle, Burce Ferguson, Nancy Hand Higby, Rob Laukaitis, Seth McEachron, Brigid Nosal, Pat Phillips, Eileen Ryan, Dottie Schneider

Also: Liz Brock, American Farmland Trust and Renee Bouplon, Agricultural Stewardship Association

The meeting began with a quick discussion of the Open Meetings Law. The Committee's meetings fall under this law and the Law requires that the meeting be posted in the local news media at least 72 hours before the meeting. It also requires that meeting minutes be taken and made available. Currently meeting minutes are being taken and posted on the Town's website: <http://www.salem-ny.com/townminutes.html>. Dottie agreed that she will contact the media to have meetings announced in the local paper.

The remainder of the meeting addressed the Farmland Protection Plan. Dottie stated that the contract had been received from the Department of Agriculture and Markets. The selected consultant is American Farmland Trust (AFT). Liz Brock from AFT stated that Chris DeBolt from the County Planning Office wanted to be at the meeting but could not attend but planned to attend future meetings. She stated that Salem was the first Town in Washington County to begin work on a Farmland Protection Plan and that several people/organizations were looking forward to helping us with the Plan development. Liz confirmed it was both a Village and Town joint plan. She envisioned one plan with recommendations for both the Town and Village. Some recommendations may be specific to the Town or Village and some will apply to both.

Liz then discussed the work plan. She said AFT plans to begin in October. She stated a steering committee with representatives of the farming community needed to be formed and suggested the Committee try to enlist some of these people by October. The first step will be to determine the goals. She stated an initial Public Hearing would occur around November. This would be a kick-off meeting to introduce the plan development to the Community. She stated a second meeting would focus on landowner education and introducing some available tools which may be considered for the Plan. A third public hearing will be held when the Draft plan is prepared to get feedback from the public.

Liz suggested the Committee brainstorm for individuals that should be among the 10 people interviewed for the stakeholder interviews. She suggested these people include farmers, land owners that lease their land to farmers and agriculture business owners. She said generally these would be one on one interviews but may include more than one interviewee especially for family farms. Liz was asked what the interview questions would be - she stated that the interviews would be more of a conversation that discussed topic areas and she would present these areas to the committee prior to conducting the interviews.

A mapping of resources would occur next. Prioritizing farm regions and purchase Development Rights programs and State grants may be identified during this process. Also looking at what is already protected and where businesses are in relation to the farms would be done. Liz said ASA and the County Planning Office would be involved in this process. It was asked how the in-kind services required by the grant would be tracked. Liz said she would contact John Brennan from the Dept. of Ag and Markets to get this information. Liz said the committee would need to track this as part of the budget.

Liz asked about what the Committee was looking for as far as the build out portion of the RFP. She stated that AFT could not do a complete build out but could look at zoning tools and what could happen if business came to town under the existing laws. She stated it may be possible to take a hypothetical 100 acres and give some scenarios.

Liz stated at the end of the project there would be a report that has the goals and strategies for meeting these goals. It would include an implementation matrix. The report will meet the criteria to get approval from the Department of Agriculture and Markets. The committee asked if the County needed to approve the plan. Liz stated just the County Agriculture and Protection Board would review the plan.

Liz requested that a letter be prepared and sent to the Stakeholder interviewees to "introduce" Liz prior to the interview process. It was suggested the Brian Gilchrist be the signatory on the letter as he is from the Salem area. Liz asked that the mailing addresses and phone numbers of the interviewees be provided to her at the October meeting. She will send a draft letter to the committee for review. AFT will be providing the agendas for future meetings starting in October, Liz will send them to Eileen who will distribute them through the usual process.

The question of what a farm or farming activity consists of came up again. We have not clearly defined what we consider a farm to be or a definition to determine if something is considered a farm. We discussed horse owners that have horses for recreation, tree farms, etc. Everyone agreed some definition of a farm needs to be decided on.

Seth was asked what the committee could do to get farmers interested. Seth stated that it would be helpful to have some sort of concise statement that could be communicated to the farmers as to what we were doing and how it might affect them.

It was decided that starting with the October meeting (Oct. 13) that the meetings would be held the SECOND Monday of the month instead of the Third. Meetings would continue to start at 7 p.m. with a possible change to 6:30 as winter approaches. September's meeting will still be the third Monday (Sept. 15).

Action items: Everyone will work on suggesting stakeholders to interview and additional farmers for the steering committee.

Eileen will distribute any information from AFT as needed.

Dottie will contact the local media regarding meetings.

Dottie and Steve will review the draft contract from AFT.

Next Meeting: SEPTEMBER 15, 2008 Town Hall 7 p.m.

AFT Tentative Timeline

October	Initial meeting of advisory group
November	Description of Agriculture in Town
December	Analysis of Agriculture in Town
January	Goal Development
February	Strategy Development
March	Strategy Revisions
April	Draft Plan and Recommendations
May	Presentation and Implementation
June	Review public comment and revise plan
July	Submit final plan