

**Town of Amherst Farmland Protection and Agricultural Development Plan
Advisory Committee Meeting - Teleconference
October 27, 2020 at 7:00 pm**

- **Welcome by Bob Gilmour, Committee Chair**
- **Attendance by Roberta Rappoccio – see attached attendance sheet**

1. PROJECT UPDATE – WENDEL – see attached Proposed Schedule

- Leanne Voit displayed the updated Project Schedule for the Plan and noted the remaining items that still needed to be completed, including the public engagement component of the plan and the stakeholder meetings
- The Schedule indicated a proposed June 2021 Completion Date

2. REVIEW OF PROJECT INVENTORY - WENDEL

- Ellen Parker opened the discussion on the DRAFT Sections 3 and 4 of the Plan that was sent out to all the committee members. Ellen emphasized that these two Sections are working drafts and changes will be made prior to the final plan
- A few conclusions were made based on the data gathered- including 1) that not all of the agricultural lands and lands with prime soils are within the Agricultural District; and 2) that the Town has lost many farms in the past decade, and that the trend is toward more smaller farms
- Several Comments were made by Committee members regarding the DRAFT Sections:
 - i. Bob Gilmour asked what area of the town is included in the Plan-the plan includes lands in north Amherst and northeast Amherst where there are large tracks of non-ag land zoned Suburban Agriculture
 - ii. Mike B. commented that Figure 2 needs to be revised to show an agricultural use on the Badding property along Transit Road;
 - iii. Figure 5 Sanitary Sewer District Map – map needs to clarify that it represents the Sewer District, and there are properties within the District without public sewer service.
 - iv. Rick Gillert asked that the Agriculture Preservation Map should be included in the Inventory Resources Section of the Plan – Roberta will forward this map and associated spreadsheets to Ellen Parker
 - v. Rachel Chrostowski states the need to clarify the symbology and data sources for the maps in these sections; and suggest adding a link to the Erie County Website for access to the most recent Ag District map (open enrollment)
 - vi. Rick Gillert suggests that agricultural lands (that are vacant) be separate out of the Vacant Land category -should be its own section (p. 8); and, at this time the Town does not own the land designated as Amherst Central Park and other privately owned golf courses-these should not be included in open space (not sure if this can be achieved with any meaningful accuracy)
 - vii. The 1,403 acres figure for park and conservation land is incorrect, please correct
 - viii. Rachel asked not to use the term solar “farms” and instead use the term solar “developments”; also recommends a larger limit on the height of a solar array if the Town wants to incorporate an ag use under the array

3. PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT – WENDEL

- Leanne explained that due to COVID-19 the Public participation plan has to be modified.
- A Poll was conducted to ascertain the preference of the committee for either a more robust webpage to include video/slides content with a comment section to allow the public to respond to the Plan; or a one-time Webinar Presentation. The results were 63% Enhanced webpage v. 38% Webinar Presentation.
- Carrie Stiver asks how the website will be marketed to the public – Ellen mentions several options: an article in the Amherst Bee, a mention at the Town meetings-Town Board, Planning Board, etc., other outreach through word of mouth by the committee members, etc.
- Mike Badding commented that the video/content for the website could include video/slides of local businesses, etc.; and could use the Town's social media presence as well (Facebook, Neighborhood pages, etc.)
- It was mentioned that the web page could also become a starting online presence for a permanent Agriculture Page for the Town in the long term that could include educational opportunities, events, etc. and other agricultural opportunities within the community
- The goal would be to have the webpage live by the end of November and comments left open until end of December.

4. STAKEHOLDERS

- Again, due to COVID-19, the proposed stakeholder meeting plan has been modified to include teleconferences with stakeholders either one on one, or in small related groups. A survey will be sent out to each stakeholder prior to the conference call.
- Victoria S. from Camoin commented that the stakeholders should include farmers and farm interests; end users, consumers. Snowball sampling- networking is a good way to approach this component of the Plan.

5. OVERALL VISION AND OBJECTIVES FOR THE PLAN – see Poll questions attached

- 2nd Poll: Statements 1-4 Results: Statement #1: 7%, Statement #2: 0, Statement #3: 13% and Statement #4: 80%.
- A comment was made about possibly including these questions on the webpage
- Rick G. commented that a mission statement should be included in the Plan – Wendy Salvati responded that there will be one included in the Plan
- Brian K. commented that one of the recommendation should be for agriculture education for K-12; and Mike Badding spoke of the adult workshops currently offered at their facility
- Carrie S. stated that the Buffalo Niagara Heritage Museum has adult workshops and a focus on education
- Sarah Gatti (Erie County Ag) suggested that the Consultants/Town look into the Erie County Food Council Plan Goals and Action Items for similar goals.

6. NEXT STEPS

- Consultants will meet with the Town to discuss the Public Participation Plan details
- Consultants will work on the Goals and Visions Section based on information received from this meeting and the upcoming public and stakeholder outreach