

Public Hearing
Agriculture and Farmland Protection Plan Update
April 23, 2015

The Public Hearing regarding the adoption of a draft Tioga County Agriculture and Farmland Protection Plan Update and associated SEQR determination was called to order by the Chair at 10:01 A.M. All Legislative members were present.

There were eight people in attendance.

The Clerk read the legal notice as published in the official newspapers.

Elaine Jardine, Planning Director, spoke. "I first want to thank the Legislature for the opportunity to develop this plan for agriculture, one of our greatest land mass economic sectors in the County. We set up a committee and the committee worked for two years to develop this plan, and I will be presenting to you after this hearing on what is contained in the plan. It was built on our 1998 original plan, so it actually is an agricultural plan update. We had public input and lots of farmer input throughout the process. The committee feels that it is a very good document and the Ag and Farmland Protection Board has also met and recommends that the Legislature adopt this plan. We have also prepared a SEQR review that is part of this hearing too, which has revealed that there will be no significant adverse environmental impacts. Thank you."

Marte Borko spoke. "I want to thank the Tioga County Legislative body for presenting this opportunity to comment on the updated Tioga County Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan. I also want to thank the farmers and related businesses that participated in the evaluation and process. It goes without saying that the agricultural sector contributes to the economy, the community, and the environment. Farming continues a heritage of land and water conservation and is a major player in the quality of life enjoyed by our residents.

"Our county farmers are fortunate to have the continued support of Tioga County Soil & Water District headed up by Wendy Walsh and Cornell Cooperative Extension headed up by Andy Fagan. It is necessary that both of these programs continue to receive both recognition of their service as well as county fiscal support. The plan with the able help of the County's GIS specialist, Bill Ostrander, has identified priority farmlands, using their value to the agriculture economy to the county, open space value, consequences of possible

conversion and relative level of conversion pressure. The scale used assigning values to prime agricultural soils or soils of statewide importance, land and active agriculture, location in a flood plain, land serving as a buffer for a significant natural resource, and level of competition from non-ag uses.

"It is imperative that these lands be protected for today as well as to guarantee the potential that those lands will be available for future farmers. The farming activity in these priority areas mitigate against catastrophic flooding as well as providing a view shed for the county tourism. Because I strongly believe that agriculture is critical to Tioga and because I believe that it contributes to our bucolic landscape, which is a hallmark of our rural lifestyle, I make the following action recommendation: "Resolved that the County of Tioga increase the mortgage tax from 3/4 of 1% to 1% and that the 1/4% increase be set aside in a dedicated fund to purchase developmental rights from willing sellers to both protect priority farmland and critical open space. Thank you."

Bob Bell spoke. "I am a lifetime resident of this county and a retired dairy farmer. I did it for 45 years and loved every minute of it. If the good Lord lets me live until 2018, my 180 acre farm purchased by my great grandfather in 1868 will be 150 years old. I have a grandson who graduates from college this year and I have a granddaughter who graduates from high school, and I have told them both the farm is here, it bought my groceries for 45 years, it will do the same for you, but you have to prove to me that you are going to make it your life's work.

"I have gotten up every day and walked on the same ground my great grandfather did in 1868 and to me that is worth more than all the gold in Fort Knox. What worries me is more land regulations put on farmers like zoning. I live in the Town of Tioga, thank God we do not have zoning, I fought it all my life and we do not need more land regulations taking farmers property rights away from them."

There being no further comments, the hearing was adjourned at 10:09 A.M.