

Towns of Homer, Preble and Scott

Agriculture and Farmland Protection Plan

Upon embarking on this project, the towns of Homer, Preble and Scott have joined together to develop an Agriculture and Farmland Protection Plan that will ensure the protection of their agricultural resources and continued viability of farming in their communities. With the guidance of a three-town Agriculture and Farmland Protection Plan Advisory Committee their broad vision has been translated into the five goals described below.

Joint Agriculture and Farmland Protection Plan Vision Statement

The Towns of Homer, Preble and Scott value agriculture and recognize the importance of farms in maintaining rural character and strengthening the local economy. The towns seek to proactively support agriculture by working to retain valuable farmland for current farmers to use and to provide opportunities for the next generation of farmers to be profitable. They seek to provide an economic climate to allow agricultural businesses to succeed in an evolving economy and ensure strong public support for farming in the region.

Regional Goals

The regional recommendations outlined below provide guidance to the three towns in supporting the agricultural businesses and farmers and protecting valuable farmland. Some of the recommendations are targeted towards town-specific policies and programs while others describe actions relevant to the three-town region. These recommendations incorporate opinions shared during public information meetings, joint advisory committee meetings, individual interviews, and information gathered from an on-line survey.

Regional Recommendations (RR) are organized under corresponding Regional Goals and encompass community programs, educational events, policy changes and regional initiatives. The costs involved in implementing the recommendations vary from no to low cost policy adjustments to more expensive programs and initiatives. Estimated cost category will be identified in a following Implementation Matrix. (Potential funding sources include: USDA, NYS DAM, NYS DEC, NYS Off. Sm Cities, etc- Calpl)

Regional Goal #1: *Ensure land use laws and local ordinances support economic opportunities for local farmers and the protection of agricultural land.*

Town codes and ordinances can have a significant impact on farmers. Local laws can create barriers to farmers adapting to changing economic conditions as well as encourage the unnecessary conversion of farmland. The Towns seek to ensure that local codes are “farm

friendly” and have adequate protections against the unnecessary loss of farmland to development.

RR 1. Educate local realtors Real Estate Disclosure Notice and the critical role they play regarding informing potential buyer from outside the area about current agricultural practices they will experience in rural areas of the towns. In addition, provide realtors with copies of a publication similar to “So You Want to Live in the Country?” Encourage local realtors to include the following Real Estate Disclosure Notice in purchase and sale contracts for all property purchased in the three towns regardless of whether the property is included in an Agricultural District.

Section 310 of the NYS Agricultural Districts Law states:

“It is the policy of this state and this community to conserve, protect and encourage the development and improvement of agricultural land for the production of food, and other products, and also for its natural and ecological value. This disclosure notice is to inform prospective residents that the property they are about to acquire lies partially or wholly within an agricultural district and that farming activities occur within the district. Such farming activities may include, but not be limited to, activities that cause noise, dust and odors. Prospective residents are also informed that the location of property within an agricultural district may impact the ability to access water and/or sewer services for such property under certain circumstances.”

RR 2. Work with the Cortland County Agricultural and Farmland Protection Board to update the County Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan. Engage Towns of Homer, Preble and Scott farmers, agricultural landowners and local officials in the County plan update process.

The current Cortland County Agriculture and Farmland Protection Plan (AFPP), dated November 1998, is outdated. Several of the recommendations have been implemented while others are no longer realistic in the current and projected economic climate. In addition, when the AFPP was developed the State of New York’s Purchase of Development Rights (PDR) program was just beginning and is now actively pursued in Cortland County.

Having representation from the towns in the update process will ensure that agriculture in the three towns is represented in this important document but will also encourage Cortland County to promote opportunities and strategies to attract and enhance current agribusinesses to the towns as part of the county’s overall agricultural economic development strategy.

RR 3. Coordinate an annual meetings of the Joint Implementation Committee comprised of one member from each town to review progress in plan implementation and provide direction to appropriate town boards and committees for implementing the plan. Ideally hire, on a part time basis, a paid staff person to coordinate the Joint Implementation Committee’s efforts.

Regional Goal #2: *Educate the non-farm public about the value and state of agriculture in the Towns and maintaining good relationships with neighboring farms.*

Although agriculture remains prominent in the Towns, many residents are a few generations removed from the farm and have limited occasions to visit working farms. As a result, there is frequently a disconnect between the producers of food and the consumers. This results in misunderstandings about production practices, food safety, and environmental stewardship. The Towns seek to facilitate discussions between farmers and the non-farm public and educate non-farm residents about agricultural practices, farm products that grown and available for local purchase and the importance of agriculture to the local and regional economy. In addition to promoting local farm products, these events can also help improve neighbor relations between the farmers and non-farm neighbor with a longer term goal of helping to sustain the local agricultural industry.

RR 4. Submit articles quarterly about agriculture and related issues identified in the plan to the Cortland Standard and town websites; also consider creating a Homer, Preble, Scott agriculture blog/ Twitter and/or Facebook for more regular submissions and updates.

Some of the individuals interviewed felt that they were not as informed of local activities as they could be. The development and distribution of a regional newsletter or similar method of communication would provide an opportunity to provide important updates and discussions of agricultural issues, property tax relief programs, farm-related events or news.

RR 5. Utilize the Towns of Homer, Preble and Scott Agriculture and Farmland Protection Plan publication to promote the benefits of agriculture by placing the Executive Summary with the Town Clerk's Office.

The Plan should be posted to each town's website with an executive summary ideally distributed to each resident.

RR 6. Seek opportunities to work with the established agriculture programs in Tully and Homer school districts. Support the local school districts ag literacy day and encourage the implementation of Ag in the Classroom.

RR 7. Work with Cortland County Local Ag Promotion Committee to promote displays and exhibits about local agricultural history and modern farming practices at local museums, libraries, festivals, etc.

When the community takes an active role in promoting local agriculturally related events it makes agriculture visible to the public resulting in residents appreciating the benefits agriculture has to their community.

Regional Goal #3: *Protect farmland by identifying high quality agricultural lands that are at risk for conversion and adopting appropriate agricultural protection strategies.*

Maintaining the agricultural land base in Homer, Preble and Scott is good fiscal policy for the towns. Farmland requires less in services than the property taxes paid on the land, and the businesses that work the land contribute to the local economy. Residential development emanating from the City of Cortland as well as the potential for development related to future energy development in the region can encourage scattered residential development that puts pressure on local farmland. It is necessary to proactively protect the land on which farms depend.

RR 8. Support increased funding for the State’s FPIG and the USDA Farm and Ranchlands Protection Program to enhance the likelihood of continuing to secure funding to protect farms in the three towns.

RR 9. Investigate other sources to fund PDR such as local transportation related priority projects.

RR 10. Support the Ag Business Development Coordinator and support County efforts to attract new farmers such as the “Come Farm with Us” program.

RR 12. Work with CCE and SWCD to encourage the continued utilization of BMPs and AEM on existing farmland and land that may be returned to production in the future.

Regional Goal #4: *Ensure that local infrastructure is supportive of agriculture and that public infrastructure improvements are targeted near the City of Cortland and other developed areas.*

Often times, simple activities such as clearing road ditches or redirecting intermittent flows or expanding the carrying capacity of a culvert can create a drainage problem on nearby farm fields. Additionally, poor citing of water lines, road expansions or other public infrastructure can encourage residential or commercial development of farmland. Thoughtful investments and maintenance of public infrastructure can both enhance economic conditions of farmers and reduce development pressure on farmland.

RR 13. In cooperation with Cortland County SWCD evaluate with the assistance of the town highway superintendents the need for appropriate buffering of farmland that meets the road edge.

Include invasive species control and encourage farmers to clean roads if mud is on the road following exiting a field.

RR 14. In cooperation with Cortland County Planning and others work to target residential growth inducing infrastructure and improvements, such as water and sewer lines and major road ways to already established residential areas. Encourage the County to adopt a Smart Growth Plan.

Towns and the County can help retain farmland by focusing infrastructure in hamlets, villages and cities. The carefully planning or targeting of infrastructure improvements (also referred to as Smart Growth) also demonstrates fiscal responsibility to managing limited local, state and federal resources. By focusing infrastructure away from priority farming areas, towns can help keep taxes lower and reduce threats to quality farmland. If non-farm infrastructure needs to be extended into priority farming areas steps should be taken to reduce the potential negative impacts on nearby farmland and farming operations. These steps might include:

- ✓ Using the Ag Districts program Notice of Intent process to guide road, water or sewer decisions;
- ✓ Establishing lateral restriction policies on new or sewer extensions;
- ✓ Developing mitigation fees designed to protect farmland near new non-farm infrastructure
- ✓ Constructing traffic calming measures on rural roads to reduce accidents between farm machinery and vehicular traffic.

RR 15. Examine ways to mitigate negative impacts on agriculture when natural gas leases for both Marcellus and Utica Shale are exercised. AFT is still working on suggested guidance for municipalities to consider.

Adopt a special review process for more intensive commercial and industrial development proposals to provide TOWNS with the ability to better assess potential impacts on nearby agricultural lands and businesses.

Ensure that zoning allows for the review and permitting of natural gas drilling (both vertical and horizontal) to the fullest extent under state laws and requirements. Ensure that any new or future natural gas drilling and gravel mining activities have minimal impact on local roads and that any restrictions for mining or drilling activities do not limit agriculture and ag related traffic/use. (See County's Road Use agreement?)

Regional Goal #5: *Enhance the local agricultural economy and support agricultural economic development initiatives on a regional and county level.*

Agriculture is an important economic sector contributing much to the local economy and quality life for residents. The future of farming in the Towns is closely tied to the economic viability of area farmers and the economic health of the regional agricultural sector. The Towns need to be proactive in supporting this sector by being a strong supporter of county and regional agricultural economic development initiatives.

Build on the assets currently in Cortland County and the three town region, such as, the good road system with access to I-81 offering development opportunities for processing and distribution of agricultural products.

RR 16. Investigate signage to pull travelers off I-81 to explore a regional agri-tourism trail, sponsor a bike ride through the three town ag area with stops at local farms and ag related businesses, support the annual Pumpkin Festival, encourage participation at the annual Ag Economic Development Summit, develop a Drive Yourself Farm Tour, promote a new rotating annual festival (strawberry?). Investigate Otsego County's Dinner on the Farm.

RR 17. Collaborate with Cortland County Convention and Visitors Bureau, other towns, Cortland County Local Ag Promotion Committee and other partners to promote the development, distribution and use of local directories such as *Foods Fresh from the Farm at Little York*.

RR18. Collaborate with Cortland County, other towns, Cortland County Local Ag Promotion Committee and other partners to foster the expansion of existing farmers markets with an eye towards the creation of a year round farmers market.

RR 19. Encourage Cortland County BDC/IDA, Cortland County Local Ag Promotion Committee, NYS Department of Agriculture & Markets and other partners to promote the development of small to medium scale food processing and packaging capacity for locally produced products.

RR 20. Collaborate with Cortland County BDC/IDA or Cornell Cooperative Extension of Cortland County, Cortland County Local Ag Promotion Committee and other partners to establish a distribution wheel or cooperative for county, school districts and other institutions to purchase local foods allowing small producers to work together.

RR 21. Work with Cortland County BDC/IDA or CCE of Cortland County, Cortland County Local Ag Promotion Committee and other partners to seek support and establishment of a County Agriculture Economic Development Coordinator position.

RR 22. Collaborate with Cortland County BDC/IDA, Cortland County Local Ag Promotion Committee, NYS Department of Agriculture & Markets and other partners to enhance access by the agricultural sector to leading edge technology such as broadband communications. Continue to build on the County's current fiber junction point expansion efforts.

RR 23. Provide active agricultural operations the option to public water infrastructure by adopting NYS Department of Agriculture & Markets policy on water hookups in Agricultural Districts.

Town Priorities for Plan Implementation

To help ensure the three towns implement the regional recommendations, individual town priorities have been identified. These priorities have been developed with input from town representatives to the joint Agriculture and Farmland Protection Plan Advisory Committee, farmers, town officials and residents from each town. Many of the priorities originate from the regional recommendations and have been repeated here if they are relevant to that particular town. Other regional recommendations did not translate to individual town priorities and will require the attention of all three towns to insure their implementation. The recommendations listed below provide a menu of options that towns and residents can choose from when supporting local farmers and protecting valuable agricultural land.

Homer

(Changes result of 7/21/11 meeting)

Regional Goal #1: *Ensure land use laws and local ordinances support economic opportunities for local farmers and the protection of agricultural land.*

Homer Recommendation 1 (HR 1.) Review current municipal Right to Farm Law to ensure local support for agriculture is demonstrated and to mitigate possible future conflicts between farmers and non-farm neighbors.

Typically, right-to-farm laws are aimed at maintaining a supportive operating environment for farmers. They document the importance of farming to a town and put non-farm residents on notice that generally accepted agricultural practices are to be expected in farming areas. Such laws can provide farmers and agricultural landowners a sense of security knowing that farming is a valued and accepted activity in the community.

HR 2. Continue to encourage farmers to seek positions on all local boards especially the Town Board, Planning Board, and Zoning Board of Appeals in order to have consistent representation from the farm community in all aspects of local government.

Historically and currently farmers have been active members and at times the majority of these boards. The single best way to insure that agricultural business interests are represented in local decisions is to continue to have farmer as members on as many local boards and committees as possible.

HR 3. Appoint one member from the agriculture community to serve on the Joint Implementation Committee.

This town representative will be someone who either farms or owns agricultural land in the Town and is closely associated with agriculture. This representative will spearhead the implementation of the joint Ag and Farmland Protection Plan on both the regional and town level; can act in an advisory capacity, as needed, to the Town Board, Planning Board, Zoning Board of Appeals, Code Enforcement Officer and Town Assessor on issues impacting agriculture and could serve as a mediator if and when a time arises that farm/neighbor conflicts become more prevalent. [** \(Judy has examples from the Towns of Eden and Ithaca\) **](#) (Also, example resolution from Town of Brutus)

HR 4. Adopt the Towns of Homer, Preble and Scott Agriculture and Farmland Protection Plan as part of the Town of Homer Comprehensive Plan when revised and update the Agriculture and Farmland Protection Plan at regular intervals.

Regional Goal #2: *Educate the non-farm public about the value and state of agriculture in the Towns and maintaining good relationships with neighboring farms.*

HR 5. Work proactively to address trespassing on farmland via local outreach to non-farm neighbors and encourage the proper disposal of trash.

When non-farm neighbors enter farmland, with either actively growing or dormant crops damage can occur to the crop and even to farm infrastructure. In addition when trash and yard waste is placed in farm fields it cause damage to expensive machinery and create health issues in livestock. Use town communication methods (newsletters, signs posted at the Town Clerk's Office or on website) to inform the public about proper disposal of trash and yard waste.

HR 6. Develop a website for the town for timely communication to all residents and regularly submit information for inclusion in the Homer News, which currently covers Board meetings.

Some of the individuals interviewed felt that they were not as informed of local activities as they could be. The development of a town website would provide an opportunity to provide important updates and discussions of agricultural issues, property tax relief programs, farm-related events or news.

HR 7. Upon updating the town's current municipal Right to Farm Law, identify locations in town for the placement of Right to Farm Law signs. [Dan recommends using examples from Chemung County](#)

Such signs provide notice to those traveling through that agriculture is an important component of the community's fabric as well as alert potential new residents that agriculture is valued in the community.

Regional Goal #3: *Protect farmland by identifying high quality agricultural lands that are at risk for conversion and adopting appropriate agricultural protection strategies.*

HR 8. In partnership with Cortland County's Agriculture and Farmland Protection Board, establish a local Farmland Protection Program to continue to build on the efforts already established.

Purchase of Development Right (PDR) is a voluntary program that pays landowners for permanently protecting their land for agricultural use. Many communities in New York State have developed local PDR

programs which pays landowners to extinguish their right to develop their land with a deed restriction known as a conservation easement; this easement runs with the deed forever. The goal of an agricultural conservation easement is to protect the land to help support the business of farming and to conserve productive soils for future generations of farmers. PDR can be applied to agricultural properties as well as lands with scenic, natural, or other open space values.

Cortland County has a selection process in place. The towns, working in partnership with the County AFPB, will allow for a strong application to the state program. Specific actions the towns should consider include:

- Work with Cortland County Planning Department, Cornell Cooperative Extension and area Land Trusts to host workshops for landowners to learn about New York State's Farmland Protection Implementation Grant (FPIG) program, also referred to as PDR and other farmland conservation options.
- Encourage Cortland County Planning Department and area Land Trusts to work with interested land owners to apply for FPIG funding.
- Criteria for a successful application might include: NEED TO COMPLETE!!

HR 9. Evaluate the potential for adopting a term conservation easement law. (long term)

Work with Cortland County Business Development Corporation and Industrial Development Authority (BDC/IDA) to research the costs and benefits of creating a town program that would reduce property tax assessments for participating agricultural landowners on exchange for a term conservation easement on their agricultural property. Consider options for providing expanded benefits to beginning farmers by linking property tax reductions for a specified period of time to minimum land use and percentage of income from farming.

HR 10. Focus infrastructure improvements to hamlets and villages (Smart Growth).

By focusing infrastructure away from priority farming areas, towns can help keep taxes lower and reduce threats to quality farmland. If non-farm infrastructure needs to be extended into priority farming areas steps need to be taken to reduce the potential negative impacts on nearby farmland and farming operations. These steps might include:

- ✓ Using the Ag Districts program Notice of Intent process to guide road, water or sewer decisions;
- ✓ Establishing lateral restriction policies on new water or sewer extensions by adopting new waterline restrictions in the town zoning ordinance;
- ✓ Developing mitigation fees designed to protect farmland near new non-farm infrastructure (potential source of local match for PDR);
- ✓ Constructing traffic calming measures on rural roads to reduce accidents between farm machinery and vehicular traffic.

HR 11. Establish a process to evaluate any changes in drainage and potential impact on farmland productivity when considering subdivision.

Drainage and tile lines can be cut when property is subdivided. This can influence the drainage and thus the productivity of the field being subdivided as well as other nearby farm fields. Towns have an application for subdivision or add to existing application for subdivision that a map be included that shows the existing field drains, these are reviewed and may require the developer to reroute the tile.

HR 12. It is recommended that Town Highway Departments consult with Cortland County SWCD or the County Highway Department prior to making any changes with regard to road ditching practices. Encourage the town to continue to make their best effort to adequately maintain Seasonal Use roads for access to agricultural lands and conduct workshops on ag issues for highway supervisors.

Promote communication between farmers and the highway department

HR 13. Recommend that buffers between farmland and residential uses become part of the zoning/subdivision???? Use T/Warick language here

Regional Goal #4: *Ensure that town infrastructure is supportive of agriculture and that public infrastructure improvements are targeted near the City of Cortland and other developed areas.*

HR 14. Annually distribute information to agricultural landowners about property tax relief programs such as agricultural assessment, farm building exemptions and Farmers School Tax Credit to insure that farmland owners are taking advantage of existing programs. [Committee recommends placing this with the Town Clerk](#)

HR 15. Encourage adoption of agricultural assessment rates by special taxing jurisdictions (fire, ambulance, library, etc.) [will need to pass a local law Town of Homer currently has a fire district.](#)

HR 16. Institute a timely Notice of Intent (NOI) process to include a copy to the Cortland County AFPB when preliminary NOI is sent to the Commissioner of Agriculture and Markets.

Notice of Intent is part of NYS Agricultural Districts Law which requires analysis of proposed public projects that may impact farms in agricultural districts. Most often these are extension of water lines. By providing a second copy to the Cortland County AFPB early on ample time for review and comment will be provided for thoughtful input to the Commissioner of Ag and Markets.

Deleted: Encourage each Town to ensure that Seasonal Use roads are adequately maintained for access to agricultural lands and conduct workshops on ag issues for highway supervisors.

Preble

(Changes as result of 8/11/11 review)

Regional Goal #1: *Ensure land use laws and local ordinances support economic opportunities for local farmers and the protection of agricultural land.*

Preble Recommendation 1 (PR 1.) Review current municipal Right to Farm Law to ensure local support for agriculture is demonstrated and to mitigate possible future conflicts between farmers and non-farm neighbors.

Typically, right-to-farm laws are aimed at maintaining a supportive operating environment for farmers. They document the importance of farming to a town and put non-farm residents on notice that generally accepted agricultural practices are to be expected in farming areas. Such laws can provide farmers and agricultural landowners a sense of security knowing that farming is a valued and accepted activity in the community.

PR 2. Encourage farmers to seek positions on all local boards especially the Town Board, Planning Board, Zoning Board of Appeals and School Board in order to have consistent representation from the farm community in all aspects of local government.

Historically and currently farmers have been active members of these boards. The single best way to insure that agricultural business interests are represented in local decisions is to continue to have farmers as members on as many local boards and committees as possible.

PR 3. Appoint one member from the agriculture community to serve on the Joint Implementation Committee.

This town representative will be someone who either farmers or owns agricultural land in the Town and is closely associated with agriculture. This representative will spearhead the implementation of the joint Ag and Farmland Protection Plan on both the regional and town level; can act in an advisory capacity, as needed, to the Town Board, Planning Board, Zoning Board of Appeals, Code Enforcement Officer and Town Assessor on issues impacting agriculture and could serve as a mediator if and when a time arises that farm/neighbor conflicts become more prevalent. ***(Judy has examples from the Towns of Eden and Ithaca)**(Also, example resolution from Town of Brutus)*

PR 4. Adopt the Towns of Homer, Preble and Scott Agriculture and Farmland Protection Plan as part of the Town of Preble's Comprehensive Plan when revised and update the Agriculture and Farmland Protection Plan at regular intervals.

Regional Goal #2: *Educate the non-farm public about the value and state of agriculture in*

the Towns and maintaining good relationships with neighboring farms.

PR 5. Work proactively to address trespassing on farmland via local outreach to non-farm neighbors and promote trash Amnesty Day.

When non-farm neighbors enter farmland, growing or dormant crops and fields damage can occur to the crop and farm infrastructure. In addition when trash and yard waste is placed in farm fields it cause damage to expensive machinery and create health issues in livestock. Use town communication methods (newsletters, signs posted at the Town Clerk’s Office or on website) to inform the public about proper disposal of trash and yard waste.

PR 6. Regularly submit timely information for inclusion in the Homer News and or Pennysaver.

Some of the individuals interviewed felt that they were not as informed of local activities as they could be. The development and distribution of a regional newsletter or similar method of communication would provide an opportunity to provide important updates and discussions of agricultural issues, property tax relief programs, farm-related events or news.

PR 7. Upon adoption or updating a municipal Right to Farm Law, identify locations in town for the placement of Right to Farm Law signs. [Dan recommends using examples from Chemung County](#)

Such signs provide notice to those traveling through that agriculture is an important component of the community’s fabric as well as alerts potential new residents that agriculture is valued in the community.

Regional Goal #3: *Protect farmland by identifying high quality agricultural lands that are at risk for conversion and adopting appropriate agricultural protection strategies.*

PR 8. In partnership with Cortland County’s Agriculture and Farmland Protection Board, establish a local Farmland Protection Program to continue to build on the efforts already established.

Purchase of Development Right (PDR) is a voluntary program that pays landowners for permanently protecting their land for agriculture. Many communities in New York State have developed local PDR programs which pays landowners to extinguish their right to develop their land with a deed restriction known as a conservation easement; this easement runs with the deed forever. The goal of an agricultural conservation easement is to protect the land to help support the business of farming and to conserve productive soils for future generations of farmers. PDR can be applied to agricultural properties as well as lands with scenic, natural, or other open space values.

Cortland County has a selection process in place. The towns, working in partnership with the County AFPB, will allow for a strong application to the state program. Specific actions the towns should consider include:

- Work with Cortland County Planning Department, Cornell Cooperative Extension and the New York Agricultural Land Trust to host workshops for landowners to present information about New York State’s Farmland Protection Implementation Grant (FPIG) program, also referred to as PDR and other farmland conservation options.

PR 9. Focus infrastructure improvements to hamlets and villages (Smart Growth).

By focusing infrastructure away from priority farming areas, towns can help keep taxes lower and reduce threats to quality farmland. If non-farm infrastructure needs to be extended into priority farming areas steps need to be taken to reduce the potential negative impacts on nearby farmland and farming operations. These steps might include:

- ✓ Using the Ag Districts program Notice of Intent process to guide road, water or sewer decisions;
- ✓ Developing mitigation fees designed to protect farmland near new non-farm infrastructure (potential source of local match for PDR);
- ✓ Constructing traffic calming measures on rural roads to reduce accidents between farm machinery and vehicular traffic.

PR 10. Towns need to evaluate any changes in drainage and potential impact on farmland productivity when considering subdivision.

Drainage and tile lines can be cut when property is subdivided. This can influence the drainage and thus the productivity of the field being subdivided as well as other nearby farm fields. Towns have an application for subdivision or add to existing application for subdivision that a map be included that shows the existing field drains, these are reviewed and may require the developer to reroute the tile.

PR 11. It is recommended that Town Highway Departments consult with Cortland County SWCD or the County Highway Department prior to making any changes with regard to road ditching practices. Encourage the town to continue to make their best effort to adequately maintain Seasonal Use roads for access to agricultural lands and conduct workshops on ag issues for highway supervisors.

Promote communication between farmers and the highway department

PR 12. Require buffers between farmland and residential uses. [Use T/Warick language here](#)

Deleted: Encourage each Town to ensure that Seasonal Use roads are adequately maintained for access to agricultural lands and conduct workshops on ag issues for highway supervisors.

Formatted: Not Highlight

Regional Goal #4: *Ensure that town infrastructure is supportive of agriculture and that public infrastructure improvements are targeted near the City of Cortland and other developed areas.*

PR 13. Annually distribute information to agricultural landowners about property tax relief programs such as agricultural assessment, farm building exemptions and Farmers School Tax Credit to insure that farmland owners are taking advantage of existing programs. [Committee recommends placing this with the Town Clerk](#)

PR 14. Encourage adoption of agricultural assessment rates by special taxing jurisdictions (fire, ambulance, library, etc.) [will need to pass a local law](#)

PR 15. Promote more rigorous consideration of the growth inducing and fiscal impacts of road, sewer and water infrastructure in the proximity to working farms regardless of the zoning district they may be located in.

Adopt the NYS Department of Agriculture and Markets (NYSDAM) recommended guidelines for connections to water lines in intensive ag areas (if Ag zoning not adopted) and be certain that these are part of any current or future districts established with the NYS Ag Districts with in the Towns. The guideline from NYSDAM regarding lateral water line hook ups are part of this Plan for consideration and can be [found on PAGE#TBD](#)

PR 16. Institute a timely Notice of Intent Process (NOI) process to include a copy to the Cortland County AFPB when preliminary NOI is sent to the Commissioner of Agriculture and Markets.

Notice of Intent is part of NYS Agricultural Districts Law which requires analysis of proposed public projects that may impact farms in agricultural districts. Most often these are extension of water lines. By providing a second copy to the Cortland County AFPB early on ample time for review and comment will provided for thoughtful input to the Commissioner of Ag and Markets.

Regional Goal #5: *Enhance the local agricultural economy and support agricultural economic development initiatives on a regional and county level.*

PR 17. Collaborate with Cortland County BDC/IDA, Cortland County Local Ag Promotion Committee, NYS Department of Agriculture & Markets and other partners to enhance access by the agricultural sector to new, clean sources of renewable energy.

Scott

Changes from 8/2/11 and 8/8/11 meeting

Regional Goal #1: *Ensure land use laws and local ordinances support economic opportunities for local farmers and the protection of agricultural land.*

Scott Recommendation 1 (SR 1.) Adopt a municipal Right to Farm Law to ensure local support for agriculture is demonstrated and to mitigate possible future conflicts between farmers and non-farm neighbors.

Typically, right-to-farm laws are aimed at maintaining a supportive operating environment for farmers. They document the importance of farming to a town and put non-farm residents on notice that generally accepted agricultural practices are to be expected in farming areas. Such laws can provide farmers and agricultural landowners a sense of security knowing that farming is a valued and accepted activity in the community.

SR 2. Continue to encourage farmers to seek positions on all local boards especially the Town Board, Planning Board, and Zoning Board of Appeals in order to have consistent representation from the farm community in all aspects of local government.

Historically and currently farmers have been active members of these boards. The single best way to insure that agricultural business interests are represented in local decisions is to continue to have farmer as members on as many local boards and committees as possible.

SR 3. Appoint one member from the agriculture community to serve on the Joint Implementation Committee.

This town representative will be someone who either farmers or owns agricultural land in the Town and is closely associated with agriculture. This representative will spearhead the implementation of the joint Ag and Farmland Protection Plan [on both the regional and town level](#); can act in an advisory capacity, as needed, to the Town Board, Planning Board, Zoning Board of Appeals, Code Enforcement Officer and Town Assessor on issues impacting agriculture and could serve as a mediator if and when a time arises that farm/neighbor conflicts become more prevalent. [**\(Judy has examples from the Towns of Eden and Ithaca\)**](#)(Also, [example resolution from Town of Brutus](#))

SR 4. Adopt the Towns of Homer, Preble and Scott Agriculture and Farmland Protection Plan when the Town of Scott's Comprehensive Plan is developed and update the Agriculture and Farmland Protection Plan at regular intervals.

Regional Goal #2: *Educate the non-farm public about the value and state of agriculture in the Towns and maintaining good relationships with neighboring farms.*

SR 5. Work proactively to address trespassing on farmland via local outreach to non-farm neighbors and promote trash Amnesty Day.

When non-farm neighbors enter farmland, growing or dormant crops and fields damage can occur to the crop and farm infrastructure. In addition when trash and yard waste is placed in farm fields it cause damage to expensive machinery and create health issues in livestock. use town communication methods (newsletters, signs posted at the Town Clerk's Office or on website) to inform the public about proper disposal of trash and yard waste.

SR 6. Regularly submit timely information for inclusion in the Pennysaver.

Some of the individuals interviewed felt that they were not as informed of local activities as they could be. The development and distribution of a regional newsletter or similar method of communication would provide an opportunity to provide important updates and discussions of agricultural issues, property tax relief programs, farm-related events or news.

SR 7. Upon adoption or updating a municipal Right to Farm Law, identify locations in town for the placement of Right to Farm Law signs.

Such signs provide notice to those traveling through that agriculture is an important component of the community's fabric as well as alerts potential new residents that agriculture is valued in the community.

Regional Goal #3: *Protect farmland by identifying high quality agricultural lands that are at risk for conversion and adopting appropriate agricultural protection strategies.*

SR 8. In partnership with Cortland County's Agriculture and Farmland Protection Board, establish a local Farmland Protection Program to continue to build on the efforts already established.

Purchase of Development Right (PDR) is a voluntary program that pays landowners for permanently protecting their land for agriculture. Many communities in New York State have developed local PDR programs which pays landowners to extinguish their right to develop their land with a deed restriction known as a conservation easement; this easement runs with the deed forever. The goal of an agricultural conservation easement is to protect the land to help support the business of farming and to conserve productive soils for future generations of farmers. PDR can be applied to agricultural properties as well as lands with scenic, natural, or other open space values.

Cortland County has a selection process in place. The towns, working in partnership with the County AFPB, will allow for a strong application to the state program. Specific actions the towns should consider include:

- Work with Cortland County Planning Department, Cornell Cooperative Extension and area Land Trusts to host workshops for landowners to learn about New York State's Farmland Protection Implementation Grant (FPIG) program, also referred to as PDR and other farmland conservation options.
- Encourage Cortland County Planning Department and area Land Trusts to work with interested land owners to apply for FPIG funding.
- Criteria for a successful application might include: NEED TO COMPLETE!!

SR 9. Focus infrastructure improvements to hamlets and villages (Smart Growth).

By focusing infrastructure away from priority farming areas, towns can help keep taxes lower and reduce threats to quality farmland. If non-farm infrastructure needs to be extended into priority farming areas steps need to be taken to reduce the potential negative impacts on nearby farmland and farming operations. These steps might include:

- ✓ Using the Ag Districts program Notice of Intent process to guide road, water or sewer decisions;
- ✓ Developing mitigation fees designed to protect farmland near new non-farm infrastructure (potential source of local match for PDR);
- ✓ Constructing traffic calming measures on rural roads to reduce accidents between farm machinery and vehicular traffic.

SR 10. Towns need to evaluate any changes in drainage and potential impact on farmland productivity when considering subdivision.

Drainage and tile lines can be cut when property is subdivided. This can influence the drainage and thus the productivity of the field being subdivided as well as other nearby farm fields. Towns have an application for subdivision or add to existing application for subdivision that a map be included that shows the existing field drains, these are reviewed and may require the developer to reroute the tile.

SR 11. It is recommended that Town Highway Departments consult with Cortland County SWCD or the County Highway Department prior to making any changes with regard to road ditching practices. Encourage the town to continue to make their best effort to adequately maintain Seasonal Use roads for access to agricultural lands and conduct workshops on ag issues for highway supervisors.

Formatted: Not Highlight

Promote communication between farmers and the highway department

Formatted: Not Highlight

SR 12. Require buffers between farmland and residential uses. [Use T/Warick language here](#)

Regional Goal #4: *Ensure that town infrastructure is supportive of agriculture and that public infrastructure improvements are targeted near the City of Cortland and other developed areas.*

SR 13. Annually distribute information to agricultural landowners about property tax relief programs such as agricultural assessment, farm building exemptions and Farmers School Tax Credit to insure that farmland owners are taking advantage of existing programs. [Committee recommends placing this with the Town Clerk](#)

SR 14. Consider the adoption of agricultural assessment rates if special taxing jurisdictions (fire, ambulance, library, etc.) are established in the future.

SR 15. Promote more rigorous consideration of the growth inducing and fiscal impacts of road, sewer and water infrastructure in the proximity to working farms regardless of the zoning district they may be located in.

Adopt the NYS Department of Agriculture and Markets (NYSDAM) recommended guidelines for connections to water lines in intensive ag areas (if Ag zoning not adopted) and be certain that these are part of any current or future districts established with the NYS Ag Districts within the Towns. The guideline from NYSDAM regarding lateral water line hook ups are part of this Plan for consideration and can be found on PAGE#TBD

SR 16. Institute a timely Notice of Intent (NOI) process to include a copy to the Cortland County AFPB when preliminary NOI is sent to the Commissioner of Agriculture and Markets.

Notice of Intent is part of NYS Agricultural Districts Law which requires analysis of proposed public projects that may impact farms in agricultural districts. Most often these are extension of water lines. By providing a second copy to the Cortland County AFPB early on ample time for review and comment will be provided for thoughtful input to the Commissioner of Ag and Markets.