

**Genoa Comprehensive Planning Group Notes**  
**Thursday 14 January 2010**

Present: Jay Ardai, \*Maria Bachich, Jim Berry, \*John Berry, \*\*Jason Cuddeback, Kelly Doolittle, Jon Eld, Peter Eldred, \*\*John Fraser, \*\*Chuck Kyle, Doug LaFave, Dorothy Lonsky, Joe Lonsy, John Mann, Marilyn Mann, Sjana McClure-Berry, Dan McGarry, \*\*Geoff Milz, Paul Mitchell, \*Ralph Nettleton, Lyn Odell, Mark Osterhoudt, Peggy Park, \*Anto Parseghian, \*Barb Patchen, Ken Patchen, Anja Peylowski (sp?), Marilyn Ramsden, Andrea Richten, Dale Sellen, Cathy Shiels, Mike Shiels, Peter Signor, \*Dave Stilwell, \*Dan Thayer, \*Susan Tosto, Kathy Vreeland, Donna Webster, \*Karin Wikoff, Connie Wilcox, \*\*Judy Wright, plus 3 more who did not sign in.

\* = Comprehensive Planning Committee Members

\*\* = Panelists

Dave Stilwell opened the meeting by welcoming everyone. He introduced the members of the comprehensive planning committee and described our work with a focus on the inventory portion on which we are currently working. He mentioned our presence at the Wheat Festival, our acquisition of useful and interesting maps (displayed on the walls for the public to view), the survey we ran a year ago, and our interest in input from the community, as a comprehensive plan should be the voice of the citizens regarding what we want to preserve and what we'd like to see change.

Dave then introduced our panelists: Jason Cuddeback and John Fraser from the Cayuga County Soil and Water Conservation District, Chuck Kyle from the Cayuga County Farm Bureau, Geoff Milz from the Cayuga County Planning and Economic Development Department, and Judy Wright, Farmland Protection Consultant. He explained that each panelist would have about 15 minutes to speak about his or her organization and how their work affects our town.

Jason Cuddeback and John Fraser of the Cayuga County Soil and Water Conservation District were the first speakers. They provided print-outs of their PowerPoint presentation. They look at NMPs (Nutrient Management Plans)— manure, water, the agricultural environment, grazing, ag plastic disposal (a new issue) and the like. They respond to ag-related complaints and come along with the DEC on inspections of CAFOs. CAFOs are required to have NMPs in which they balance the fertilizer application with plant uptake including allowances for losses to the environment. They look at silos, milkhouse waste, and BMPs (Best Management Practices) for manure storage and separation, digesters, draghose applications – each has different benefits, some reduce odors, or affect the amount to be spread; they look at getting the maximum nutrient to the plants rather than lost to the environment. All of Cayuga County is under an umbrella plan. They keep an inventory of what you have on a farm – number of animals, erosion, fuel, everything. They document what the farms have, what they don't have and what they should have. Water quality concerns have been found and Soil and Conservation can help find funding to address these issues.

When they look at prescribed grazing, they look at heifers, dry cows, etc. They are concerned with maintaining forage supply, paddock size, fencing, water, etc – they want to keep the cows out of streams.

In 2009, John Fraser said, they received only 10 agricultural-related complaints and none from

Genoa. When they receive a complaint, they look at the site, take photos, contact the farmer and write up a report. The DEC invites them along on inspections. The DEC wants to inspect all large farms annually. There are not too many medium-sized farms. But the DEC has only 2 guys doing inspections for all of Region 7 which covers several counties and they have other responsibilities in addition to inspections. Soil and Conservation does not call the DEC with every complaint – only those they feel are of real concern. Most calls they get are odor complaints. There are no laws to regulate that.

Questions:

--What is the level of service to Genoa compared to other towns? Down here (below Auburn) towns get “quite a bit” of attention.

--How is the general health of the town’s soil and water? I don’t think there is an upcoming problem. Technology in this area is not even being used in other places – it’s incredible: manure storage and application technologies are getting better; farms are forced to be more efficient to save money. Manure is being treated as a resource instead of waste.

--How are recommendations arrived at? Years of experience and data, NCRS standards from Cornell research, all tailored to soil charts. It all goes into a computer program including results of tests of soil and manure samples.

--Why do some big farms smell worse than others? Odor has to do with how the manure is handled as well as what kind of cattle, their diet, their age and other factors. How recently the manure has been agitated and the temperature are also factors.

The next speaker was Chuck Kyle of the Cayuga County Farm Bureau. They create policies from their membership. There are 418 members in Cayuga County. Some are farmers; some are associates, such as equipment dealers and other interested parties. They have an annual policy development meeting with the voting members. They discuss the issues, agricultural business and past policies, then develop new policies. At the state level, they have 2 delegates. If Cayuga County had 30 more members they could have 3 delegates. At the State meetings they hammer out state policy. Farm Bureau staff and members influence policy on issues from state taxes to food safety to anything affecting agricultural assessments, for example. The Farm Bureau also does education for the public, for the Legislature, and for their farmer members. They send notifications of changes in laws. They have speaker who discuss new methods, etc. The Farm Bureau encourages people to get involved with networking and learning. A current big issue is garbage trucks – there is a movement to force trucks to take main routes. This proposed legislation affects farm transportation – getting produce out, feed and equipment in, etc. However you look at it, agriculture needs to be part of your comprehensive plan.

Questions:

--With the price of land going for \$4,000-\$5,000 an acre, how can little guys compete? You can’t make that back in a lifetime. Land is being purchased not just for its value as farmland but for development and security.

--Is it true that you are supposed to have one acre of land for every cow? There is no simple formula.

The next speaker was Geoff Milz of the Cayuga County Planning and Economic Development Department. He gave a handout of the rough outline of his comments and some documents from

the Town of Niles Comprehensive Plan. Geoff's department deals with land use, farm protection plans (PDRs, or Purchase Development Rights), planning for agriculture. Currently 4 towns in Cayuga County are working on comprehensive plans. All of them are dealing with similar issues. Each is dealing with those issues in a different way, each having its own unique goals and tools for protecting agriculture. The Town of Niles has just finished their plan. The other towns are Serling, Fairhaven, Summerhill and Springport.

NYS Ag & Markets has a program – Ag & Farmland Protection Plan. Towns can apply to these programs. These are very strategic, targeted plans. Four \$25,000 awards were given this year: Brutus, Cato, Sennett and Aurelius. There are lots of peer-to-peer resources. County-wide, Cayuga County has a 1996 plan which is now out-of-date, from before the PDR program, so it is almost useless and will be updated. This is on Geoff's workplan. Agriculture is often a separate and distinct portion of a town's plan, even though it is tightly tied to economy, land use and more. It is good that we are looking hard at agriculture as a specific portion of our plan. We should be looking at sample plans from other towns. Our plan to protect agriculture should have 2 prongs: 1) Protect land resources and 2) how to enhance economic viability. An issue that is not often addressed and should be is sustainability.

Questions:

--FROM what are we protecting agriculture? Development, residential, commercial or what? You have to identify those things and tailor your strategic actions. Classic tools are comprehensive plans, zoning laws, subdivision laws and site plans. More advanced methods include Right to Farm laws, PDRs, transfer rights, lease and development rights, agricultural districts, property taxes, CIPs (Capital Improvement Plans – water lines, for example) and infrastructure. There are lots of documents on the Farmland Trust website. Cato is an example of looking at economic viability of development. Map out the agricultural economy – what products, inputs, what and where, where is marketing done, what is the web of food chain running through the community. Sketch it all out. Look at SWOT analysis. Look at the map you've made. Hone in on strategies to increase opportunities and minimize threats. The State has a well-established precedence in 8,000 acres of protected land – easement purchases made by the state which extinguished threats.

--Can you address the process for these PDRs? Isn't it a 5 year process? The State issues an RFP (Request for Proposals). Up to 5 applications per county may be submitted, plus some towns (those with comprehensive plans which the State deems protective of agriculture) may additionally submit up to 3 applications. Pre-applications go to Cayuga County Planning office and are ranked by criteria then presented to the County. The County chooses 5 to send on to the State, where Albany chooses which ones to award, with a cap of \$2.3 million per county. It is an arduous 3-5 year process – it is not for the faint at heart of the impatient. If Genoa wants to include a PDR in its comprehensive plan, just ask for help from the Cayuga County Planning office. We can help you learn how to submit an application, how to make it clear and transparent, how to administer the plan – we will work together with you. When you own land, you can separate out the rights for different kinds of development, to be sold or leased. When a plan is picked by the State, they take away the rights to develop it for anything but agriculture, thereby extinguishing the rights thru use of easements. The Land Trust monitors this in perpetuity.

Our final speaker was Judy Wright from the Farmland Trust. She gave out several handouts.

The first covered some of the economic impacts of agriculture on our community. She address the cows to jobs ratio as well as other jobs involved in agriculture. She urged us to look for food manufacturing as a new area of development. She discussed tax advantages, and noted that household take more services than farms and told us we could find the second hand-out, a fact sheet “Cost of Community Services Study,” on the American Farmland Trust’s website which shows that agriculture pays more than its fair share for taxes. She also gave out a sheet on “The BMP Challenge: Accelerating Agriculture’s Contribution to Clean Water.”

Questions:

--When you describe the balance between taxes paid by CAFOs and services received from public coffers, are subsidies and low/no-interest loans which aren’t available to smaller farms included in the ratio? [Judy]No, those figures do not include subsidies, but I am not really sure about the rest; I will try to find out. [Chuck]:That doesn’t come out of local taxes. [Questioner]: What does that matter? That money still comes out of our pockets in the form of state and federal taxes.

--What is the future of organic farming? I see it growing.

--Large farms using a lot of offshore labor are sending large amounts of money out of Cayuga Count – as much as \$4,000 per week at the King Ferry Post Office alone. Estimates show between \$8-9 Million flowing out of the country annually. How can you say that large farms are “keeping money in the community?” Americans won’t do the work. Nursing homes which employ foreign labor see the same thing.

--Audience response to answer to previous question: It’s not that Americans won’t do the work; as long as the labor is available for less than a living wage, the farms will go with the illegal and other offshore labor. The percentage of offshore labor on small farms compared to CAFOs is that there are not too many foreign laborers on small farms. The big jobs on farms – tracking, sales people, service to farms (go to American labor? --- not sure of my notes).

--Is there not much development pressure in Genoa? I have no idea.

--Audience response to answer above: We don’t have development pressure in Genoa.

-- Response to audience member: An appraisal is done on a whole farm. The appraiser looks for a comparable farm in the area to see what it sold for, to whom, for what purpose. That’s how they find fair market value. Another farm may be sold as a farm. That one has a agricultural value. You want to have high market value and low agricultural value. If the two figures are close together, it is not much worth it.

--Planning chair response to discussion above: The planning committee is not seeing much development pressure now, but we are trying to plan for the future, which can be a challenge.

--What negative impacts do you see of agriculture on the community? Can we trust farmers to do the right thing all the time? Yes, they want to do the right thing. Farmers are good stewards as they are running their businesses and making decisions. Southern Cayuga has intensive agriculture which is very forward thinking, aside from the bad apple here or there.

--Geoff Milz added to the discussion above: Water quality issues are what we see as a potential negative impact. We see issues of p-balance, phosphorus in the lakes, which comes from agriculture, but also from septic and other sources. Buffers help. Our plans include aggressive implementation of BMPs.

--Chuck Kyle added to the discussion above: Farmers have good intentions but sometimes their hands are tied; more regulations sometimes hurt profitability.

--What draws people and keeps people living in Genoa? Living in Genoa means you are likely

to be here either because you are part of agriculture or because you have a connection to higher education. The overall population is declining as people, especially the younger people, are leaving. Those who come back care about the community.

--PETA is trying to put limits on how many animals a person may own, including dogs, and also to ban certain breeds. Beware of these movements in new laws. NAIA is fighting PETA so you can have as many animals as you wish.

--Small farms are being pushed out and the area's agriculture is being condensed into fewer big farms. The National Animal ID program – the chips they want to put in animals – is prejudiced against small farms, for example.

--Response to above statement: We are still seeing small farms starting up and doing new things. We are seeing more niche farming and organic farming. But, if you add a layer of regulations, it adds a layer of cost.

Respectfully submitted,

Karin Wikoff

Secretary, Town of Genoa Comprehensive Planning Committee