

Agriculture advisory committee
Chemung County Soil & Water District Office
851 Chemung Street, Horseheads
Notes of October 20, 2005

Attendance: chair Dawn Schmidt, Tom Giles, Br Bruno Lane, Lee Kraszewski, Steve Hughes, Mark Watts, Richard Usack, Vern Robinson and note taker Walt Nelson.

The notes of the September meeting were distributed.

Chair noted her letter to the editor in the Star Gazette on behalf of this group thanking the management and owners of Riverside Holiday Inn for providing space for the East Side market.

No report from Farm Bureau. Their annual meeting was October 15. Its attendance was down. Several members mentioned they received one day's or no notice of the meeting.

Ellen Knap noted a citizen's group has engaged an attorney regarding the landfill. Alliances have been forged with battlefield historic group against the expansion of the landfill. A lawsuit is impending. Question: is a landfill fill possible/potential point or non point source for pollution?

Diane Fiorentino (CCE) and Liz Hepner attended the recent Agriculture in the Classroom training at Cornell. It appears unlikely that Horseheads will embrace using local foods in their school kitchen. They are interested in posters depicting the Farm Bureau NY Harvest Week event.

There was no report from the August 25 Agriculture Task Force meeting in Penn Yan. Lindsay Wickham will hopefully be able to share information from that at a future meeting.

The Agriculture Awareness event planned for the Mall is most likely taking place the second weekend in June. Dawn asked if it might be worthy to consider combining it with the 4-H overnight event in February. Walt will check with Mike Manchester.

Erin has passed a Right to Farm law. Baldwin is seriously looking to pass one also. Veteran tabled theirs. Ashland looking to consider a similar law, along with Big Flats, Southport and Elmira. Rhetorically what about the towns of Chemug Van Etten, Catlin and Elmira Heights? There are horses in the later. Mark will be trying to get in the town supervisor's agenda about the right to farm topic.

Mark reported that they would be making a push over the winter to complete AEM Tier 1 for farms in the County. The incentive for participation for the landowner is an AEM plan opens up grant monies for land improvements. A side benefit is the work will result in a census of farms in the County, if they are able to reach all the farms. Those with just a few large animals could be missed. Dawn commented that about 200 landowners have

at least one horse, for example. The sum is about 2-3,000 horses in the county. Dawn will begin the collection of that segment of agriculture. A comprehensive beef census may be more difficult, particularly in light of more grass fed beef. These producers are not buying in feed.

There was discussion relating to notes from this Board receiving wider distribution. They might be posed to a web site such as that of CCE or SWCD. Might maps of the Agriculture districts also be posted to a web site? Might the Farm Bureau web site be an appropriate site?

Walt relayed that the County is not unique in its collection of sales tax on heating fuels. Chemung is among about 20 counties with taxing entities (towns, cities, school districts) collecting sales tax on fuel. None of our neighbors collect such a tax.

Walt relayed the possibility of a small rumen processor coming to the County. This would afford Halal processor. One site is the former Shappies requiring major overhaul to comply with USDA, making it questionable financially.

Next meeting, November 17 8am Soil and Water Conservation District office.