

Farmland Preservation Zoning Kick-off Summary:

The next step in the Farmland Preservation Plan is to implement new agricultural zoning districts to meet the state standards for certification consistent with Chapter 91: Farmland Preservation. A total of 41 people signed-in attending the workshops. There were 16 people in attendance on the 30th and 25 people on the 31st of January. Maps were displayed and individuals asked specific questions of the staff members prior to the formal presentation.

The formal presentation refreshed the residents of the County's goals for Farmland Preservation Zoning. Key changes to the statute and how that affects our towns and their residents was explained. A couple interesting components included: the minimum lot size of 35 acres is no longer a requirement, there is more latitude for local governments to permit agricultural accessory and related uses, and soil and water conservation compliance measures are required for tax credits. The three tiers of tax credit components and availability were explained. Lastly, the presentation included the two-year timeline for the comprehensive revision of the zoning ordinance and how that affects towns' decision-making over the next 24 months. These presentations can be located at: www.sccwi.us/farmpresplan.

Following the presentation and corresponding questions and answers, the participants were asked six specific questions to help guide and provide input into the drafting of the new farmland preservation zoning districts. Most people identified their primary interest for attendance was to preserve farmland, learn the effect on the towns, and information seeking to determine if they will participate. When asked what the smallest size you would consider a farm, twice as many people indicated a farm could be between one and ten acres vs. those indicating a farm was 20 acres or more. County staff asked if our priority should focus on flexibility to divide lots or flexibility of land uses, 3:1 people said land use flexibility should be our focus. Other questions focused on what the county should change from the existing Exclusive Agriculture district, what agritourism means to residents, what difference the districts should have, and compatibility of different land uses in farmland preservation zoned land.

Most people participated in the exercise lending invaluable information as the county moves forward to draft acceptable districts encouraging town participation.

County staff thanked the group for their participation. The next steps will be drafting the new zoning district(s) and meeting with individual towns to gauge level of interest and participation.