

**MINUTES OF THE SPECIAL JOINT MEETING OF THE
TOWN, PLANNING AND ZONING BOARDS: May 2, 2011
REGARDING FARMLAND PROTECTION**

The meeting began at 7:30 P.M.

Members Present: **Zoning Board:** Dan O'Shea, Robert Lieber, Linda Riehlman and Amy Bertini, absent was Kay Vossler. **Planning Board:** James Harris, Barbara Albro, Donna Doody, absent were Nate Currie and James Seamon. **Town Board:** Peter Knapp and Debra Brock, absent were Tom Fox and David Morse.

Also Present: Town Supervisor, James Doring, Judy Wright (American Farmland) and Daniel Dineen, County Planning.

An overview of the program and application was given by Daniel Dineen. The program was started as a (3) Town effort between Homer, Preble and Scott. Each town was awarded a \$25,000.00 grant to develop a regional plan, goals and objectives, as well as Town-specific. For the past one and one-half years, the Town has been working to develop goals and recommendations, and has prepared a working map which shows farm land as being owned vs. leased, in order to find the percentage of each. Of the (3) Towns, Preble has Interstate 81 development pressure, and has land zoned commercial or industrial

Judy Wright then addressed the Boards and stated she would do a step-by-step overview of the work done to date to make sure that we are on target on a Town level and to seek input from the Boards. Peter Knapp briefly addressed the first hand-out at the prior joint meeting of the Boards and stated if the Boards wished to see any changes, they could be addressed at tonight's meeting. Peter then went through each enumerated goal as well as the Regional recommendations. Judy Wright stated one purpose is to protect the area's rural character and asked for ideas and suggestions for regional activities. Discussion was had to hold an annual celebration of some sort and one suggestion was for a strawberry festival. Any such annual festival could rotate between the (3) towns.

James Doring asked about Regional Goal #3(protect high quality agricultural lands at risk of conversion), and asked how this could be accomplished. Peter Knapp explained that the Town can apply to purchase development rights, to keep property from a developer, which could be administered by the Town or Department of Ag & Markets. This would become protected land by agreement, and could only be used as farmland in the future. Peter noted that the amount of gravel in the area makes it attractive for both farming and development. Another suggestion was to promote local products via road side stands or otherwise and to try to attract a local processing plant with community support. There is nothing like that currently in the area. Examples would include cheese processing, wine or maple syrup.

Judy Wright spoke to paragraph #9(regional Goal #3) and conservation easements. This could result in a tax reduction on agricultural property and the Town does not believe there would be community support. Debra Brock spoke of ways to encourage green space and limit

development and Bob Lieber noted that residential and farm property need to co-exist. It was stated that Preble currently has about 11,500 acres of farmland, including forest. Peter Knapp asked for any additional comments and concluded the presentation. He said that any comments would go back to the committee. James Doring stated that we must value and protect our farmland – it is very important to our community.

Further discussion was had as to how the plan is adopted by the Town Board and it was noted that eventually there would be a public hearing once the plan is finalized. Any further or additional comments can be directed to Peter Knapp and Debra Brock.

The meeting adjourned at 9:20 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Mary Anne McCloskey, Secretary
Planning and Zoning Boards