



Planning in Delaware County

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Agriculture, Agri-Tourism and Delaware County

A major component of the most recent conference of the New York Upstate Chapter of the American Planning Association was the importance of the small family farms and making them economically viable for young farmers. In recent years Delaware County has highlighted the importance of young farmers, as well as future farmers in Delaware County with the adoption of a Comprehensive Agriculture and Farmland Protection Plan as well as supporting initiatives by the Delaware County Economic Development Department and the Industrial Development Agency (IDA) to fund agri-tourism businesses and alternative farming programs. In addition, Delaware County has been working with the Agriculture and Farmland Protection Board to consolidate County Agricultural Districts making each district more viable.

In recent years the Delaware County IDA has assisted agri-tourism businesses such as the East Brook Llama Farm, Healing Waters Farm and Petting Zoo, the Maple Shade Farm in Delhi, Enviro-energy, LLC an alternative agricultural energy company, a start-up loan for the Stone and Thistle Farm, the Burn Ayre Farm, the Mountainside Farm in Roxbury and the Lucky Dog Farm in Hamden. Additionally the IDA sponsored an Agriculture Micro-enterprise program in conjunction with SUNY Delhi as an educational program for agricultural business planning. This program continues through the Cornell Cooperative Extension agricultural programs.

Agriculture has historically been the backbone of Delaware County's economy and it has continued to flourish in spite of dramatic changes both in the economy of Delaware County and New York State. The construction of the New York City Watershed reservoirs and the signing of the Memorandum of Agreement were major changes to the landscape in Delaware County as well as its agricultural practices.

Delaware County responded to these changes with an emphasis on protecting the local economy, family farms and local land rights. The development of the Delaware County Action Plan (DCAP) highlights the county's mission: "To assist Delaware County's residents, farmers, businesses and communities in meeting water quality restrictions and objectives without the loss economic vitality and growth." Programs under DCAP range from public infrastructure improvements to precision feed management programs for farmers. In addition to DCAP there are other agricultural based watershed programs including whole farm planning being done through the Watershed Agricultural Council.

Outside of the NYC watershed agriculture has continued to thrive by changing with the times. Many family farms have taken creative steps to bring additional income to their farm businesses through the development of small cottage industries. These include production of yarn products from sheep or llama herds, maple produc-

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Watershed Connections By Kristin Janke

Set high upon the Shawangunk Ridge in New Paltz, NY, the Mohonk Mountain House was the setting for the recent "Watershed Connections" conference on November 16th. As attendees climbed the mountain to the massive resort, they were treated with impressive views of a broad valley and the distant Catskills. These views served as a reminder that even though the conference focused on stream management within the Hudson River basin, the lessons learned could be applied anywhere.

A wide range of stakeholders were present at the conference, both as present-

ers and as members of the audience. The New York State Department of Environmental Conservation, the New York City Department of Environmental Protection, the United States Department of Agriculture Natural Resources Conservation Service, numerous Soil and Water Conservation Districts, public offices, non-profit organizations, municipalities, and the farming community were all represented.

The presentations were highly informative, with a spectrum of topics ranging from floodplain management to riparian

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Watershed continued

buffers, proper site design to farming in a floodplain. One of the most important take-home messages: the old saying “the solution to pollution is dilution,” does not apply to the waterways of our nation. Seemingly insignificant instances of poor management on the part of landowners, construction outfits, farmers, highway managers, etc. can contribute to negative effects on water quality and quantity. On the positive side, however, even the smallest steps toward proper stormwater, stream, floodplain, or watershed management can make a significant difference.

Agriculture and Agri-tourism continued

tion, honey production, cheese making, organic vegetable production, specialty markets for beef and vegetables to NYC restaurants, and seasonal businesses including farm stands and “pick your own” produce fields. These innovative practices are supplementing the farm income as well as providing an essential educational component to the community about the importance of agriculture in Delaware County.

and the continued efforts of the Delaware County Board of Supervisors to protect local land rights, agriculture has a bright future in Delaware County. For information regarding agricultural programs contact the Delaware County Planning Department at (607) 746-2944 or the Delaware County Economic Development Department at (607) 746-8595.

Delaware County is committed to our agricultural community and through the efforts of agri-tourism programs supported by the IDA



SARA Grant By Spencer DeVaul

In February of 2007 the Delaware County Planning Department, with support from the Delaware County GIS Steering Committee, applied to the New York State Archives and Records Administration (SARA) Local Government Records Management Improvement Fund (LGRMIF) to do a GIS Tax Parcel Data Conversion from current Coverage to Geodatabase Format. In July of 2007, the SARA awarded Delaware County \$63,595.00. Delaware County has signed into contract with Fountains Spatial, Inc. to assist in completing this project.

By converting the County’s digital tax parcel data from coverage format into a geodatabase, the efficiency of ongoing tax map maintenance will be significantly improved. As a result of improved tax map maintenance, county employ-

ees working with newly implemented geodatabases and enhanced software will be able to take full advantage of a wide array of analysis tools available in their new software. The Real Property Tax Service Administration (RPTSA) itself will reduce its workload by going from multiple maintenance procedures (paper, autocad and GIS) to just one general format (geodatabase). Updates to the Community Online Mapping Information Tool (COMIT) website will be made with more timely updates coming from the RPTSA.

This is a high priority project for Delaware County for two reasons. First, technology improvements are difficult to stay ahead of. GIS is no exception. With enhancements and improve-

ments to software and the way data is distributed, it has become essential that any government or business using GIS continue to grow its efficiency by implementing sound practices for distribution. Second, there is increasing demand for land records data from many county agencies (County Clerk, Emergency Services, Department of Public Works, Public Health, etc.), local agencies (town planning boards, town highway departments, etc.), private sector businesses such as realtors, surveyors, appraisers and other businesses and from the public in general. The prudent and efficient way for the County to meet these demands is to streamline the process of providing timely access to GIS data in an easy-to-use manner. This project will accomplish this impor-

Flood Buyout Program Progresses By Jessica Ulmer

Since May of 2007 when SEMO and FEMA approved Delaware County’s application for a County-wide Flood Buyout, the Delaware County Planning Department has been moving forward in the process. Appraisals were completed by C.F. Olin Appraisal Services out of Afton, NY on 28 approved properties. After reviewing the appraisals some property owners chose to withdraw from the program, leaving a total of 21 properties for acquisition. The 21 properties are located in Hancock, Sidney, Walton, and Deposit.

Each of the properties were surveyed and new survey plats were field for each parcel to be acquired. Once new deeds were drafted and protective covenants were prepared to ensure the lots will remain forever wild the county was able to close on each of the 21 properties.

Once the county took title to each parcel all structures had to be removed and the sites needed to be restored to a natural state. The final property was completely restored by July 29, 2008 leaving 21 vacant parcels.

Currently Delaware County Planning is preparing potential re-use strategies for each parcel that would coincide with the requirements of FEMA and meet the objectives of the program. Each parcel will be evaluated for uses that comply with local zoning laws and allow for public use of as many lots as possible.

Once the local communities and FEMA approve the proposed re-use plans each lot will be offered to the municipality in which it is located. For additional information about this program please contact the Delaware County Planning Department.

The Need for the Soil Profile Analysis By Kent Manuel

A Soil Profile Analysis, commonly referred to as "Soils tests" is an effective means of determining soil suitability of a parcel of land and therefore is an integral part of a local municipality's subdivision review process.

Soil suitability is a general term that can apply to a wide range of soil characteristics such as a soil's ability to support structural improvements and more commonly a parcel of land's ability to properly treat sewage by means of a sub-surface waste or septic system.

Determining soil characteristics is an exact science and a task most appropriate for a licensed engineer or soil scientist. The subdivision regulations within your municipality most likely require that a soil profile analysis be performed by one of these professionals and their respective reports presented as part of an official application for subdivision review. This information is required to ensure that any new lot being proposed can be demonstrated to support on site septic treatment, any proposed structural improvements and is therefore in this respect "buildable".

If an applicant cannot demonstrate that a proposed lot can support on site septic treatment, the creation of that lot should be prohibited based upon the adopted subdivision review regulations.

A soil profile analysis typically involves two parts: a deep test pit and a percolation test. A deep test pit provides a variety of information pertaining to soil suitability including the depth to bedrock or fragi-

pan (very hard layer of soil or "hard pan"), the type of soils encountered above the fragipan, and a depth to water when applicable. State regulations require that a deep test pit be dug to the bedrock or fragipan or five (5) feet, whichever is encountered first.

A percolation test is used to determine a soil's rate of absorption as it applies to proper treatment of sewage. This is performed by digging a hole of a specified depth, saturating it with water, and taking a series of time measurements to determine the rate of absorption. The percolation rate is determined by measuring the amount of time it takes for water to drop one inch in the test hole. Acceptable results depend on the type of absorption system being proposed and local regulations, but typically range between two (2) or three (3) minutes and sixty (60) minutes. State-wide absorption rate standards have been adopted and are available from your local Health Department. Water absorbed to quickly is evident of very permeable soils and a situation for which this rate exceeds the allowed rate for adequate sewage treatment. This scenario results in untreated sewage traveling greater distances increasing the potential for the contamination of onsite or neighboring water bodies and/or drinking water supplies. A percolation rate slower than the state standard also creates a problem of sewage treatment and the operation of a septic system. Some communities re-

quire that more than one series of soils tests be performed on any proposed lot; some municipalities only require that a percolation test be performed.

Scenarios may arise in which applicants for subdivision review do not feel that a soil profile analysis is necessary for a proposed subdivision; it is important to adhere to the municipalities regulations to avoid making special exceptions. In applications where a proposed parcel is of a significant acreage or the owner states that they have no plans to build a dwelling on a proposed lot, often the Planning Board will have to explain to the applicant the reasoning for requiring the soil profile analysis. This is also sometimes the case when a subdivision is being proposed as part of a Land acquisition proposed by either the New York City Department of Environmental Protection (NYCDEP) or another land trust involved in similar acquisitions. Another scenario may occur when a hunting/game club is acquiring lands to expand their territory.

The reasoning behind requiring the soil profile analysis for each of these scenarios is uniform: Change over time. At some point in the future, ownership and intentions for use of a parcel may change. For example, the dissolution of a hunting club could lead to the transfer of lands to new owners that may want to build a residence. The NYCDEP has not issued a formal statement indicating that they cannot sell parcels of land acquired through their watershed protection program and if soils tests have

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NYC Land Acquisition Review By Jessica Ulmer

As most of you are aware, the New York City Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) has been acquiring property and conservation easements on lands within the New York City watershed under the Land Acquisition and Stewardship Program (LASP) described in the 1997 Memorandum of Agreement (MOA). A substantial amount of this acquisition/easement activity has taken place in Delaware County and given the large amount of vacant land it is anticipated this trend will continue in

Delaware County.

In response to each land acquisition / conservation easement notice, municipalities can double-check the information presented by DEP to ensure that the acquisitions/easements meet the requirements set forth in the MOA. This process is called "Local Consultation" (MOA paragraphs 60, 71-72). Because of the complicated nature of this process, the Delaware County Planning Department (DCPD) has assisted many municipalities by reviewing

DEP proposals and field-checking their information. To offset expenses to the Town for consultants hired during the review process, the MOA (paragraph 148) provides for "Local Consultation Funds" in the amount of \$30,000.00 per Town or Village. To date, starting in 1998 a total of 202 parcels have been reviewed for DEP land acquisitions and conservation easements in Delaware County; a total of 13,842.83 acres.



Soils continued

been required during the original creation of these parcels, if and when they are sold into private ownership, each parcel will have already been proven to be adequate for proper sewage treatment.

Soils are a valuable tool for both the planning process and the applicant. They give both parties a relative guarantee that there is at least one acceptable home site on a parcel of land; a benefit the owner, any prospective buyer, and the municipality.

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Snowmobile Trails By Jessica Ulmer

Delaware County was approved for 344 miles of trail for the 2007-2008 Snowmobile Grant that is funded by the New York State Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation Office. The County will receive \$79,700.00 to disperse amongst the seven clubs who maintain the State snowmobile trails in Delaware County. The State sponsored clubs in Delaware County are Otego Snow-Goers, DOCS Snowriders, Central Catskill Trail Association, Hamden Hill Ridge Riders, Maywood Snowriders, Delaware Val-

ley Ridge Riders, and the D&D Snowdiggers, serving all areas of the county. New trails have been submitted to NYS Parks and Recreation for the 2008-2009 Snowmobile Grant. The Planning Department is waiting for the approval of those trails at this time. For more information about contacting a local snowmobile club near year please contact Jessica Ulmer at 746-2944.



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Mock Apple Pie



Mock apple pie was discovered on the journey westward around the middle of the 19th century. North American settlers yearned for apple pie, but apples were scarce in the western wilderness, so the young pioneer women came up with a dessert that mocks the flavor of apples.

While the original recipe used soda crackers, Ritz adapted the recipe during the Great Depression in the early 1930's to use the Ritz brand of butter crackers and put the recipe on the back of their cracker box.

Since then others have adapted the recipe to use zucchini during the summer harvest as a way to use up the abundance of zucchini in the family garden. Below is the original recipe and an adapted recipe using zucchini. Enjoy these great desserts with your family.

Original Mock Apple Pie

- Pastry for 2-crust pie
- 36 round butter or soda crackers, broken in large pieces (about 1-3/4 cups crumbs)
- 2 cups sugar
- 2 teaspoons cream of tartar
- 2 cups water
- 2 tablespoons lemon juice
- zest of one lemon
- 2 tablespoons butter
- 1/2 teaspoon ground cinnamon
- 1/4 teaspoon ground nutmeg (optional)

Preheat oven to 425 degrees F. Line glass pie plate with 1/2 of pastry. Place crumbled crackers in pie plate on top of crust. Mix sugar and cream of tartar in saucepan. Gradually stir in water until completely combined. Bring to boil. Reduce to low and simmer for 15 minutes, without stirring. Add lemon juice and zest. Allow mixture to cool. Pour syrup

over crackers. Dot with butter. Sprinkle with spices. Put top crust on, and seal edges. Cut vents into top crust. Bake for 30 to 35 minutes or until crust is golden brown. Cool on wire rack.

Zucchini Pie

- 4 c. sliced zucchini
- 1 c. apple juice
- 2/3 c. white sugar
- 1/2 tsp. cinnamon
- 3 tbsp. cornstarch
- 1 ready made pie crusts

Spread sliced zucchini in bottom pie crust. Combine apple juice; white sugar, cinnamon and cornstarch in pan and simmer until thick. Pour over zucchini and cover with top crust. Cook at 350 degrees until brown; approximately 60 to 80 minutes.