

Farmland Preservation Is Succeeding

Some folks have the mistaken belief that the Purchase of Development Rights program is just too costly. Some believe that achieving a goal of 80 percent preservation would never work through the PDR program, (there just isn't enough money) and that upzoning is the only tool in the box. *Rumor has it the sky is falling.*

The heart of the debate lies in Southold and Riverhead townships -- and the question is whether or not the respective towns should reduce potential density by "upzoning" farmland. In Southold the current zoning is 2 acre and some are recommending 5 acre zoning. In Riverhead most farmland is currently zoned 1 acre residential and the same parties are recommending 2 acres or greater.

LI Farm Bureau's members maintain the position that zoning does not preserve farmland. It will reduce potential density of the future build out of the respective towns, but it will not preserve one acre of land or the farmer on the land. If you truly want to "preserve" farmland, we invite you to work with us to ensure funding at all levels of government for the purchase of development rights program at the County and town level, a program established over 25 years ago that has preserved in perpetuity over 10,000 acres of farmland.

Recent Political / Governmental Developments:

LIFB has worked very hard over the last several years in order to get the funding in place. Last congressional session's Farm Bill included nearly a billion dollars for the PDR Program thanks to Senators Chuck Schumer and Hillary Clinton, as well as Congressman Felix Grucci. Governor George Pataki and State Senator Ken LaValle, Assemblywoman Patricia Acampora (North Fork) and Assemblyman Fred Thiele (Southampton) ensured \$2.4 million in state funding for preservation in Suffolk County.

Senator LaValle and Assembly members Acampora and Thiele passed legislation to extend the 2% Real Estate Transfer Tax another 10 years (Community Preservation Fund) to ensure adequate local funding for farmland preservation. In addition, Suffolk County through its annual budget appropriations along with the Towns, has 25 million dollars available for farmland preservation. In fact, the S.C. Farmland Select Committee recently added 20 new properties to the acquisition list of interested landowners wanting to preserve their farmland totaling nearly 1,000 acres. The KeySpan property in Jamesport with 300 acres of prime farmland was also included on the list. This property is a priority for preservation by the environmental community and thanks to intervention by the governor, legislature, local government, Keyspan Corporation and the LIFB, the property has been preserved forever...for farming and parklands.

Long Island Farm Bureau was and remains the only organization to push for funds dedicated for the sole purpose of preserving farmland. As an association, we have gone to Albany and Washington to fight for our fair share of monies and continue to do so. The environmental

community, albeit concerned with the preservation of open space, has done nothing to ensure that financial resources are directed toward Suffolk County and our East End Towns. Had the environmental interests fought for State or Federal funds years ago, perhaps they would not be arguing for a quick fix today in the manner of upzoning. *The sky therefore, is not falling.* There are some very reliable and equitable programs in place. The entire East End community, which includes farmers, environmentalists and landowners should be working together to secure tens of millions of dollars aimed at maintaining the rural quality of Southold and Riverhead, because in the end, everyone wins.