

Town of Lima - Agricultural Advisory Committee
Meeting Report – March 4, 2026, 6:30 PM

PRESENT: Chairman, Mike Neenan, Ed Blodgett, Jr., Lee DeKramer, Ron Gruschow, Marc Krieger, John Lehning, Jeff Recktenwald, Tom Simpson

GUESTS: Austin Blodgett, Ron Blodgett - Town Councilmember, Scott Caccamise, Philip Gottwals and Anna Jensen - Agricultural and Community Development Services, Jacob Kelly - Livingston County Planning Department, Adam Lewis - Town Councilmember

Mike Neenan called the meeting to order at 6:30 pm and opened with the Pledge of Allegiance.

Mike introduced Jacob, Anna, and Phil, and explained that the county is going to be updating their agricultural and farmland protection plan as it is 20 years old. Phil shared his background and explained that he'll be guiding the process of updating the plan.

Phil stated that the number of farms in Livingston County has decreased, and the size of farms has increased. Small roadside stands are increasing in number. Phil also stated that livestock farming is becoming less prevalent, and wages in Livingston County are much higher than in other places in the state. He also stated that Albany is making it tough for farmers; there is not a lot of grant money and commodity pricing is out of whack from farm to table.

Discussion was opened for the committee to share their concerns for the future of agriculture in Lima and Livingston County.

Pressure from solar development is seen as a significant threat to farmland in the next 5-10 years. It was suggested that legislation updates are needed to prevent large scale solar development in Lima. Adam and Mike mentioned that the town board is working on creating a plan that would put more responsibility on landowners who sell or lease land to solar development companies. Discussion ensued about the negative impacts solar has on farmland, including that heavy metals are reported in the soil of decommissioned solar farms, and underground water aquifers are being disrupted, like what recently happened at the Horseshoe Project in Caledonia. A recent report from the Potato Growers of Michigan found that broken glass remains in the soil of decommissioned solar farms, which can then be found inside tuber crops such as potatoes that have grown around the debris.

Concerns were expressed about housing development pressure, especially once public water is installed. Public water will continue to expand over time, making this an ever-growing threat.

A statistic was shared that 15% of cropland is expected to change hands in the next 4 years (Farm Journal). This started a discussion about aging farmers: there are more farmers over 75 than under 35 in the United States (Wall Street Journal). The need for succession planning was discussed, along with different resources that are available to help with farmland transfer, such as purchasing development rights, installment purchase agreements combined with a zero

coupon bond, and private activity bonds. Making farmers aware of these and other options, as well as sharing ways farmers can help one another accomplish their mutual goals of keeping farmland productive and out of development, is a need that should be addressed in the new plan.

County infrastructure was brought up as a concern, as many roads and ditches are not wide enough to allow for modern farm equipment to safely travel between farms/fields.

Similar to the current plan, communication with the public (both citizens and government officials) is key to the success of agriculture. For example, many people are concerned when new manure lagoons are built nearby, yet most aren't aware that this is driven by a state-wide initiative to increase the manure holding capacity of dairy farms. Additionally, providing education to the public about the commodity market and the economics of agriculture, and how these impact prices at the grocery store, is important.

Phil stated he's hoping to have a draft of the plan done by early summer and then it will be shared with the town for input. There will be two public hearings as well before the plan is complete.

Adjourned at 8:40 PM
Report submitted by Mike Neenan