



Work Group Meeting Notes

Work Group Name: Agriculture Work Group
Work Group Chair: Duncan Ross
Meeting Date: Monday, September 12, 2011

Work Group Members Present: Duncan Ross (Council Member), Kathy Konst (Council Member for Chris Collins), Carolyn Powell, Amy Fisk, Deb Roberts, Richard Zink, Fred Johnson, Charlene Ryder, Paul Bencal, Jim Bittner, Megan Mills Hoffman, Graham Smith, Christina Orsi (Council Member)

Others Present: Laura Ryan (facilitator), Rachel Teaman (SUNY, writer), Cheryl Krazmien (ESD Administrative Assistant for Agriculture Work Group)

Summary of Meeting: Duncan Ross, Chair of the Agriculture Work Group gave a brief overview of the group and thanked everyone for participating. All that were present introduced themselves and stated the organization that they represented.

Laura Ryan, the facilitator, explained that the goal of the meeting was to brainstorm and come up with creative ideas using the SWOT analysis for the Agriculture producers in WNY. After clustering all the suggestions that were given, the following are some of the highlights of the analysis:

Strengths:

1. Strategic Locations
2. Natural Resources
3. Critical Mass
4. Human Capital

Weaknesses:

1. How to leverage market opportunities and improve consumer education
2. Regulations: How to remove regulatory barriers
3. Incentives: How to fund applied research and programs that support agriculture and new business formation
4. Human Capital: How to encourage next generation and access to agricultural labor



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Opportunities:

1. Rural development: We might integrate development into agriculture (like the Amish)
2. Branding and Marketing: We might expand/brand WNY products through aggressive marketing
3. Expand capital for agriculture: It might increase capital to expand agriculture business
4. Increase specialty agriculture products
5. We might expand food processing
6. We might attract more visitors (tourism)
7. We might better develop an agriculture workforce (labor)

Threats:

1. Expand market
2. Improve image of agriculture production
3. In what way can we overcome trade issues
4. How might we better educate regulatory agencies and bring them to the farm
5. How to increase profitability
6. How might we overcome sprawl to protect agriculture and increase urban development
7. How might we increase tax base

After discussion on the analysis, it was determined that it is now necessary to get strategies into place. Strategies need to be drafted by the end of September, as the next Council Meeting is in October. Also, Duncan Ross asked the group that if anyone had any stories about NYS Regulation Departments to please email them to him.

Concern was also raised about disaster preparedness, and that it is necessary to get a plan in place, because the farmers cannot wait a month for power to be restored.



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Next Meeting Date:

Conference call will be held on Friday, September 16th at 9:00 a.m. (email will be sent with conference call number)

Next meeting will be held on Tuesday, September 20, 2011 from 10:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m., in the Martin Room, 6th Floor, 726 Exchange Street. **LUNCH WILL BE PROVIDED**