

**TOWN OF NICHOLS**  
Tioga County, NY

**REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS**

**CONSULTING SERVICES FOR FARMLAND PROTECTION PLAN DEVELOPMENT**

**INTRODUCTION**

The Town of Nichols, NY seeks proposals from qualified parties to help develop and write a farmland protection plan.

**Proposals MUST BE RECEIVED by 5:00 p.m. November 9, 2009**

Proposal Submission Requirements:

Proposals must be submitted through postal mail to:

Tioga County Economic Development and Planning  
c/o Josh Brown, Planner  
56 Main Street  
Owego, NY 13827

**QUESTIONS CONCERNING THE RFP**

All questions about this RFP should be submitted to the above address or via email at [brownj@co.tioga.ny.us](mailto:brownj@co.tioga.ny.us)

All questions must be submitted by 5:00 p.m. November 2, 2009

# Nichols Farmland Protection Plan RFP

## BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

Current land use trends in the Town of Nichols cause competition and conflict with farming. Some of the County's most valuable and productive farmland along the Susquehanna River has been lost to development in the town.

Gravel mining is a predominant practice in the Town of Nichols, as the Susquehanna River runs along its northern border and the surrounding river bed/valley area is abundant with valuable gravel. Low commodity prices make it difficult for farmers to compete with the price gravel companies are paying for the same piece of land. Additionally, gravel mining may limit or preclude its future use for farming, and is an eyesore for local residents and motor travelers on I86/NYS Route 17 compared to scenic hillside farms and rolling croplands along the highway.

Two recent development projects in the Town of Nichols that have also competed for prime farmland are Best Buy Distribution Center and Tioga Downs Racino. The Best Buy Distribution Center was located on previously productive cropland. The site was ideal for the distribution center as it was located right off the four-lane highway (Route 17C/I86), has an abundant water supply and is close to the river for waste water treatment purposes. Tioga Downs was an existing facility that was completely rebuilt, but is adjacent to prime farmland. With plans to expand the facility to include a hotel and retail outlets, this farmland's future could be in jeopardy as well. Tioga Downs, does however, bring a unique agricultural demand for locally grown feed and bedding for the horses. These facilities coupled with the future upgrade to I-86 could lead to a more rapid pace of developmental growth along this corridor that has not been seen in the past.

The Nichols Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan will consist of the information and layers used to identify agricultural lands to be protected, the evaluation of the lands demonstrating their importance and contribution to the local community and economy, and finally a list of strategies, programs and policies to implement designed to protect the identified farmlands. The inclusions of policy statements in this document are important as the Town of Nichols currently does not have an adopted comprehensive plan.

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## **COLLABORATIONS**

The consultant will collaborate with Town of Nichols Boards, County agencies and the local Cooperative Extension. These agencies are committed to providing planning services, mapping services, soil and natural resources information, analysis of agricultural resources, conditions and trends, and other information and planning services.

Involved agencies include:

- Tioga County Economic Development and Planning
- Tioga County Soil Conservation District
- Tioga County Agricultural and Farmland Protection Board
- Tioga County Geographic Information Systems
- Cornell Cooperative Extension
- Nichols Town Board
- Nichols Planning Board

## **SCOPE OF SERVICES**

a) Hold meetings with Town boards and Planning Committee to lay out the planning process. Work with the Steering Committee and hold up to six meetings during which farmland issues are discussed and strategies for the plan developed. Meetings will be open to the public to encourage an understanding of the planning process, with time for public comment.

b) Review existing Town ordinances and land use regulations to determine if these are consistent with the agricultural and farmland protection policies contained within the proposed farmland protection plan. Also review County Ag and farmland Protection Plan for complimentary goals.

c) Evaluate the full range of zoning and land use techniques available to protect agriculture, taking into account the geographic, economic, legal and cultural realities in the Town and select preferred approaches.

d) Hold monthly meetings with farmers and other residents to identify agricultural and farmland protection concerns and needs and to engage the public in the planning process. Members of the County Agricultural Protection Board and local officials will be invited to attend. Public meetings will also serve an educational purpose, informing participants about the importance of farmland protection and building support and commitment for the Agriculture and Farmland Protection Plan. Meetings will be publicized through press releases and flyers in local businesses and community centers.

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- e) Stakeholder interviews (interviews with farmers, business leaders and other stakeholders) will also be held to help identify issues.
  
- f) Work with Tioga County Soil Conservation District Office to review soil information to determine if adequate information is available to make land use decisions. Update as necessary.
  
- g) Evaluate existing and proposed infrastructure plans for possible impact on agriculture.
  
- h) Review current economic conditions and trends. Determine the value of the Town agricultural economy and associated alternative energy development potential. Identify other agriculturally-related public and community values such as open space, water quality, flooding, and stormwater areas. Analyze the consequences of conversion and estimate levels of conversion pressure.
  
- i) Work with County Agriculture & Farmland Protection Board, County Planning Department and Cooperative Extension to inventory and map agricultural related resources, including farm-related businesses, farmers markets, tourism destinations, educational and financial resources and other components to determine “on the ground realities.”
  
- j) Use the County’s existing GIS resources and develop new maps to identify and overlay prime agricultural soils, active farms by type, Agricultural Districts, and zoning within farm areas, noting farmlands designated as priorities for protection.
  
- k) Select protection approaches, conduct a build-out analysis and adopt best options to protect agriculture.
  
- l) Draft a plan that presents a specific program and strategies intended to be used by the Town to promote continued agricultural use, building on data gathered in the planning process and public sessions. Include an implementation section for public officials, boards, agencies and citizens, with action items, assigned responsibilities, projects funding needs (and opportunities), and a timeframe for carrying out each item.
  
- m) Meet with the Town lawyer to review plan.
  
- n) Have the plan approved by the Town Board.
  
- o) Submit plan to Tioga County Agriculture & Farmland Protection Board.

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p) Town will submit plan to the Commissioner of Department of Agriculture and Markets for final approval.

## **DELIVERABLES**

- (1) Progress reports as described below
  - Summary report of public meetings
  - Summary of Stakeholder Interviews
  - Inventory and Mapping of agricultural resources
- (2) Identification and prioritization of lands for protection
- (3) Approaches, Strategies and policies to be implemented
- (4) Draft Farmland Protection Plan
- (5) Final Farmland Protection Plan

## **MANDATORY QUALIFICATIONS**

To be eligible for consideration the proposer must have previously completed at least two Farmland Protection Plans or two Comprehensive Plans with an agricultural component or emphasis. Comparable work experience may be considered.

## **PROPOSAL CONTENT**

Proposals must include the following information:

- (1) Resumes (or other written statement of qualifications) that clearly and concisely identify the experience of all individuals that will be working on the Plan. Please include any agricultural experience and background.
- (2) A written description of the Consultant understanding of the project and how the Consultant will meet the deliverables. Consultants may propose options such as web casting or other uses of technology to facilitate completion of the Plan and minimize travel costs.
- (3) A time line for the duration of the project.
- (4) A budget which clearly states the personal service costs to complete the project and other anticipated costs such as office supplies, printing and travel.

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## **PAYMENT**

Contract amount cannot exceed \$21,000. Payment shall be made upon the submission of an invoice and the required milestone progress report

### **Retainage:**

Ten (10) percent of the budget amount of this Agreement will be retained to ensure completion of the work under this Agreement. The total amount retained shall be paid to the Consultant as the final payment under this Agreement.

## **NOTIFICATION OF AWARD**

The Committee will notify the successful proposer(s) verbally, followed by a written confirmation. Each proposer whose proposal is not selected will be notified in writing (either by email or postal mail) by the Committee.

A contract defining all project terms and conditions and responsibilities of the successful proposer(s) will be developed and reviewed by the Town Attorney.