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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Farm Bureau10/29/1565 people | YFR11/16/1520 people | YGA11/17/1536 people | PSCFO11/19/1523 people | PASA2/6/1632 people | Cattlemen’s Association2/17/1616 people |
| # focus group members involved | * Township supervisor
* Zoning hearing board
* Planning commission
* Township auditor
* School director
* Former school director
* Former township supervisor
* Former county commissioner
 | * Township auditor
* Zoning hearing board
 | * Township supervisor
* School board member
* Parks and recreation commission
* Borough Council
* Planning Commission
 | * Township solicitor
 | * Current Township supervisor
* Current school board director
* Planning commission
* Former county commissioner
* Environmental Advisory Council
* Shade tree commission
* Park committee
* Senior citizen committee
* Extension Board
* Ambulance committee
 | * Township auditor
* Planning Commission
 |
| Level of participation, changes from recent past | * Fewer farmers involved today
* In many counties, used to be nearly all farmers
* Some counties still have high level of farmer involvement: Erie County, Bradford County
 | * Fewer farmers involved today
* Parents, grandparents were involved
* Some young people involved
 | * School boards in Apple Belt always have at least one grower (Adams County)
 | * Fewer farmers than in past
* Farmers actually over-represented as % of population in elected offices and on planning commissions
* Plain sect not represented at all
* Conservation districts required by law to include farmers
* Depends on how rural the community is - no representation in urban areas
 | * About the same (for person who reported being a supervisor)
* Some had parents/grandparents previously involved
* Many younger individuals did not know of previous history since they are new residents in community
* Probably more 20 years ago
 | * Level of involvement depends on area of state – Berks still high, Somerset less so
 |
| Reasons for low level of participation | * Fewer farmers - smaller pool to draw from
* Farmers in areas with decreasing ag presence are discouraged, may be struggling. Example dairy industry in Northern Tier before Marcellus
* Urban retirees have more time, run against farmers
 | * Serving means struggles with new residents
* Changing nature of communities, farmers feel outnumbered
 | * Not a critical mass of farmers in some areas. Elected officials are 2-3 generations removed from farming.
 | * Fewer farmers - smaller pool to draw from
* The same amount of farms are operated by a smaller group of farmers
* For working supervisors, job is far more complex today
* More professionals moving to rural-urban fringe who are better qualified to serve
 | * Look to big government (Federal & State level)
* Farmers in areas with decreasing Ag presence are discouraged, not welcomed.
 | * Influx of non-ag retirees with more time to get involved
* Fewer farmers operating more farms
* Farmers getting older – national average age is 68
* Farmers who are involved have decades and generations of tradition of public service in family
 |
| Barriers | Time concerns* Time to serve
* Time away from family
* Family takes more time now (e.g. off-farm activities for kids)
* Unwillingness to take on ‘life sentence’ of service
 | Time concerns* Time away from family
* Hard to meet schedule of meetings: farm work takes priority
* Already serving on ag organization boards
 | Time concerns* Time to serve – multiple meetings each month
 | Time concerns* Time to serve
* Time away from family
* Already serving on ag organization boards
 | Time concerns* Time investment
* Time of meetings
* Already involved in other capacity
* Time away from family, family health issues
 | Time concerns* Farmers working longer hours, running larger operation to make same profit, spending more time on employee management and record-keeping
 |
|  | Conflict concerns* Polarizing and agenda-driven local politics
* Exposing family to nasty politics
* Lack of civility – opponents not willing to agree to disagree
* Most farmers are non-confrontational by nature
* Having to make decisions that affect family friends and neighbors
* Intimidation from activists, developers, others
 | Conflict concerns* Public service is stressful
 | Conflict concerns* Have to deal with other people’s opinions. Farmers are independent and used to making their own decisions
* Exposing family to nasty politics
 | Conflict concerns* Lack of civility – opponents not willing to agree to disagree
* Public scrutiny
* Negative connotation of politics
* Thankless job
 | Conflict concerns* Aversion to politics
* Perceived and/or real disconnect between Ag and agenda-driven local politics
* Local government more interested in urban/commercial development
* More focused on roads, fire, basic responsibilities
* Waste of time (ex. Serving on EAC and board just does what they want)
* Ol’ boys club
* Not born here so not welcomed into community
 | Conflict concerns* Citizens don’t understand farming and don’t want to
* People think farmers are wealthy and don’t want to hear about challenges
* Farmers take the blame for all kinds of environmental issues
 |
|  | Business concerns* Opportunity cost – takes time away from business
* Loss of business, due to community boycotts
* Cost to campaign – when asked if it cost money to run, about 60% said yes
 | Business concerns* Opportunity cost – takes time away from business
* Renting a lot of land, don’t want to jeopardize relationships
 | Business concerns* Impact on business – can lose customers if make unpopular decisions
 | Business concerns* Cost to campaign
 | Business concerns* Don’t want local government to know what they do

-Ag & Bio Security safety protection |  |
|  | Other concerns* Apathy and/or disgust with government
* Lack of sense of community
* Lack of knowledge of what to expect in office
* Need to be tech-savvy
* It’s a thankless job
 | Other concerns* Can’t make a difference at local level (systems too big)
 | Other concerns* Concern about impact of Sunshine Act and ethics laws: personal liability, exposure of personal financial information
 | Other concerns* There is competition for local government seats
 | Other concerns* Apathy and/or disgust with government
* Lack of sense of community
* Lack of knowledge of what to expect in office
 | Other concerns* Loss of confidence in government at all levels
 |
| Issues | * zoning- gas drilling- hogs, chicken- retail value-added
* anti-Marcellus faction keeping farmers from leasing
* neighbor relations and urban/rural fringe: odor, noise
* pushback on specific sectors: hogs, chickens
* political activism against traditional farming
* dealing with unfunded mandates
 | * neighbor relations and urban/rural fringe: odor, noise
* taxes
* anti-Marcellus faction keeping farmers from leasing
* political activism against traditional farming
 | * anti-Marcellus faction is nasty and litigious
* influx of non-ag development results in lack of consensus on a long-term vision for the municipality
* zoning issues, and specifically for agritainment
* neighbor relations and urban/rural fringe: odor, noise
 | * neighbor relations and urban/rural fringe: odor, noise
* township regulations (case-by-case)
* local issues like decreasing ag education in the schools
 | * zoning- gas drilling

- stormwater, grading requirements- not allowed to provide on-farm education to community- retail value-added* Other Farmers in area Support of Marcellus
* Finding and leasing land, land use
 | * Local building regulations and permitting requirements
* Zoning
* Citizens against new farm operations such as CAFOs
* Property reassessment
 |
| Suggestions for increasing involvement | * Build a sense of community, get people to care more
* Need sense that others are behind you (fellow farmers, Farm Bureau)
* Stress impact of local decisions i.e. taxes
* Motivate to public service, not specific issues
* Create a succession chain, so that someone can serve a term or two and have someone else waiting in the wings
 | * Local issues will motivate
* Need sense that your voice matters
* Stress importance of continuing family traditions
* Organizational support (i.e. PFB) to provide guidance and help candidates prepare for office
 | * Develop mentors for people interested in serving
* Train people on how to serve (not just how to run) beforehand
* Encourage retired and semi-retired people who have more time
* Emphasize ‘what’s in it for me’, the impact of public service
 | * Need specific issues to rally farmers to action
* Improve civility at public meetings
 | * Share Chester County Ag Preservation model
* Educate government & community about value of an EAC, have EAC speakers bureau
* Need sense that others are behind you, that being involved makes a difference (fellow farmers, organic growers)
* Stress impact of local decisions i.e. taxes (Land assessment different)
* Get others involved. Motivate to public service, not specific issues
* Create a succession chain, so that someone can serve a term or two and have someone else waiting in the wings
* - Share success stories
 | * Have to show local impact on case-by-case basis, recruit farmers to get involved when there’s a local issue of concern
 |
| Other | * Farm Bureau interested in developing data on levels of participation, will be doing something this winter – Sam Kieffer
 |  |  |  | * Attendees would like to have more programming at PASA covering:

- local government, structure, authority, power, running for office- how to get involved- land use - zoning versus land development- Right to Farm legislation * Have Extension ECD provide Value of Ag Economy at local level program at conferences to audiences such as PSATS
* Impact of Federal and State Representative redistricting and relationship to local government
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| Pithy quotes | * “If you’re not at the table, you’re on the menu” GT Thompson
* We used to be involved because we could be problem solvers, now everyone just looks to big government
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