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|  | Farm Bureau  10/29/15  65 people | YFR  11/16/15  20 people | YGA  11/17/15  36 people | PSCFO  11/19/15  23 people | PASA  2/6/16  32 people | Cattlemen’s Association  2/17/16  16 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 |  |
| 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 |  |  |  |  |  |