

Farm Conversation

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'Farm Conversation' explores

by ANDREA KIMBRIEL
Editor

Clarence farms need support and respect, said Hans Mobius.

"It's just very important to get back to our roots — to let people know there's food on our table because of farmers," he said.

Mobius hosted a recent "Farm Conversation" at his Maple Row Farm on Salt Road in Clarence.

The June 13 event drew about 45 people, he said. About 70 invitations were sent out to those identified as involved in agriculture by the town's assessment rolls.

"We were just delighted that we had such a good turnout," he said.

The event was presented by the Erie County Farm Bureau, of which Mobius is a board member, and Clarence Supervisor Scott Bylewski. It included presentations by Albert Weber of the Town

Assessment Office, Nancy Smith from the Western New York Land Conservancy, Clarence Animal Control Officer Jerome Schuler, engineer Timothy Lavocat and Doug Emerson from the biomass industry, which involves biological energy sources.

Participants were able to ask questions of the presenters.

Clarence has a number of horse farms and other forms of agriculture, which have a significant impact on the local economy, said Mobius. He said agriculture benefits the town in various of ways, including through the necessary purchases of feed, straw and hay, and other items.

The number of farms in New York State has shrunk from about 350,000 in the 1960s to 36,000 today, he said, but Clarence still has about 50 percent farmland. Mobius said he hopes to see it remain that way.

The Erie County Farm Bureau

encouraged Clarence to pass a Right to Farm Law and has been successful in getting 21 municipalities in Erie County to enact such a law. Mobius said the organization hopes to get the others to do so in the future.

The Farm Bureau is interested in bringing this Farm Conversation format to other towns and is creating a pamphlet on it now, he said.

Drainage is an issue that impacts many Clarence residents, including farmers.

Much of the northern part of the town used to be farmland, with ditches kept clean by farmers, said Mobius. When the ditches stopped being maintained, they filled with trees and other materials and started causing problems for other parts of the town.

The town engineer discussed a town-wide drainage plan in development, with a report on it to be